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## **The Study of Statue of Women on Iranian Coins**

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### **Abstract**

By examining Iranian coins, this study investigates the statues of Iranian women and manner their presence from Achaemenid periods until Jalayerian era in Iran.

The study deals with coins since they are regarded as the precious documents of history, culture, and art of every nation and state, and relatively less affected by physical corrosion. The general purpose of this research is to study the women statues in different periods of Iran with regard to the motifs and decorations as well as minted writing son the coins. Examined coins reveal that the presence of women on the coins changes depending on converting to Islam—as before and after Islam. The study concludes two different aspects whether before Islam and after Islam as follow: 1. Based on beliefs and faiths of those era with the goddesses' statues; 2. Based on political aspects of those era.

**Keywords:** Coin, Women, Women statue, Before- Islam, After- Islam.

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## 1. Introduction

Since ancient times many symbols of female goddesses have been obtained in Iran which generally shows the power of worshipping mother goddess in pre- agriculture societies, and then, this thought can be find in arts and human-made things. Also these beliefs can be seen in remaining coins in Iran. Coins are considered valuable documents and evidences of Iran history, culture and art. Therefore, to study social status of Iranian women and manner of their presence, we selected the coins. Coins are messengers of internal situation, thoughts, cultural heritage, religion and creed of people through the history.

There is no doubt that presence of women's statue on coins shows the importance of their presence in society and in national identity and cultural identity of that society. This influence was not always bold but it existed all the time. Existence of monuments, showing pictures of women and queens on the coins represent their political role and power.

Several studies have been done on field of coin and its decoration regarding statue of women rulers. For instance, in her paper, *Kingdom of Pourandokht, the Sassanid Queen and Studying Coins of Her Time*, Malekzadeh studied coins of only one Iranian lady ruler. Meanwhile, Bahriye Üçok, professor of Ankara University in Turkey, introduced just only lady rulers of Islamic period in her book titled *Ruler Women*, which is translated by Muhammad Taqi Emami. In this investigation has been tried to study the terms of thinking about religion, politician, intellectual foundations and social status of Iranian women and also their relationship with decoration of coins (picture, symbol and name of women) since Acheamenian era until Qajar era, so that women status in Iran society can be recognized in this way. This paper is divided into two sections: before Islam and after Islam.

This study implements a descriptive approach to the research subject by examining academic literature as well as historical documents.

## 2. Coins Development History

Before coins, transactions between nations depended on the exchange of goods. As age of metal started, huge change initiated in human society evolution and in fact economic systems and bases of trading were founded. Different metals like copper, silver, gold and their alloys like bronze (combination of copper and tin) were used to make things in shape of bullion, ring, bar, square, and round pieces to use them in trades. But coins as we see today were a piece of metal with certain weight, material and cutie with government official sign on it.

Coin is a messenger of past times and a document that has not changed since the beginning of appearance.

Numismatics has an important role in recognition of religions and faiths and ancient mythology. We see statues of gods and goddesses on lots of coins. Presence of women on design and decoration of coins can't be ignored, whether as ruler and goddess or because of political advertising. According to Herodotus the first standard coins were minted by Croesus, king of the Lydia, about 2562 years ago. Despite of trading rings, these coins had several properties like certain weight, material and cutie.

In Iran before Islam, in Achaemenian era trading and paying wages to workers and industrialists were by exchange of goods and sheep was basic pay rate.

At the same time of first coins appearance in Lydia, Achaemenid Cyrus ruled in Iran. In order to expand the territory under his jurisdiction, Cyrus occupied Lydia and other neighboring countries. In first encounter with coin and trading with them, he welcomed this method and ordered to mint coins like Croesus coins and make them common in all Achaemenian territory (Pakzadian, coins of Iran).

In time of Achaemenid Satraps, at the beginning of each king's reign, a picture of king were prepared as much as it could fit the contours of the face and these pictures did not change until the end of his reign, however, his face changed. Greek goddesses' pictures were seen there sometimes. In Achaemenid Satrap's time we can see lots of coins with women statues on them. We are going to introduce some of these goddesses' statues on the coins of that era.

Athena: in Greek mythology, she was goddess of wisdom and supporting arts and families, storm commander and most special goddess guarding the Athena city. And the famous temple of Parthnon was made for her. Athena visualized as a beautiful woman in war dress, with golden helmet, shield and spear. Owl was known as dedicated bird to her. Sometimes her statue was minted on coins as she is throwing thunderbolt or she holds spear in her hand. In Acheamenian coins, those with Athena's statue and her symbol (owl) on it can be found. Picture 1 shows one of the first appearances of women as goddess on Iranian coins.



**Picture 1:** *Athena and her symbol owl – information bank of Kumesh museum of stamps and coins - Semnan.*

Medusa: meaning ruler was a beautiful maiden, at the beginning who could change who ever looked in her eyes into stone. After Poseidon, god of sea seduced her in Athena's temple made this goddess furious and Athena changed her into the ugliest living thing, an armadillo. Athena changed her hairs into snakes. In picture 2 on one side of the coin statue of Farnabaz and on the other side statue of Medusa is minted.



**Picture 2:** *Farnabaz and Medusa - information bank of Kumesh stamps and coins museum - Semnan.*



**Picture 3:** *Achaemenid coin- Information bank of Kumesh stamps and coins museum-Semnan.*

In picture number 3, we see a dancer woman. We think this woman served at king court in Achaemenian age.



**Picture 4:** *Satrapi Ayunia- Auktion Pasargad Coins website*

In picture 4, sign of Swastika (Carrousel of sun) is minted on back of the coin and statue of woman on front of it. This coin goes back to 250-200 B.C. In year 331 B.C., Alexander occupied Achaemenid territory after defeating Darius the third.

Seleucid era (312-250 B.C.): Seleucids ruled a short time and before extinction minted coins by Arshak. We witness goddesses' presence in this era too. Like the cases below:

Demeter: in Greek mythology, goddess of fertility and product, Zeus's sister and mother of Persephone. As goddess of fertility had symbols like wheat, corn poppy and snake. In picture 5 in addition to Alexander the Macedonian, at the back of coin we witness presence of this goddess having wing and holding wheat in her hand.



**Picture 5:** *Coin of Alexander the Macedonian. Statue of Goddess Demeter on Back of the Coin - information bank of Kumesh stamps and coins museum – Semnan.*

Goddess Nike: In Greek mythology goddess Nike is the angel of victory. This goddess have wing and usually holds kingdom ring above head of the king. Sometimes Nike is seen in palm of Zeus or king of Parthia or another goddess on the coins. Statue is seen on the coins of Ard the first, Paker the first, Farhad the forth and Farhad the fifth and Venun the first and... from Parthian kings. Alongside this goddess, we see Narid.



**Picture 6:** *Seleucus the first and Nike- information bank of Kumesh stamps and coins museum – Semnan.*



**Picture 7:** *Anticus the seventh on the back of goddess Athena and Nike's coin- Kumesh stamps and coins museum – Semnan*

Parthians (274 B.C- 224 A.D.): Parthian kingdom also known as Parthian empire was one of the political and cultural powers in Iran and ruled a big part of western Asia for 471 years. This empire was established in west north of Iran by Ashk, Parni tribe leader, in third century B.C. after triumph of Parthian Satrap.

Farhad the fifth; in Parthian era (247 B.C.) Mouza was a slave woman and entered the king's court as a bondwoman. However, she was an educated person and was sent to Iran's court to control it. She got the power after married Farhad the fourth and after poisoning him, queen's son, Farhad the fifth sat on throne in year 2 B.C. At this age we witness presence of queen Mouza on back of Farhad the fifth's coins. She was a powerful woman who controlled the kingdom indirectly by controlling her child.



***Picture 8: Farhad the fifth and queen Mouza***



***Picture 9: Farhad the fifth and queen Mouza with goddess Nike.***

In the decades of the Seleucids presence in Iran, their arts beliefs and faiths were accepted among people and Iran's court and even reflected in coins. Generally in coins of Parthian era we witness statue of different goddesses, animals and plants that were symbol of goddesses.

Artemis: was goddess of hunting, wild life, virginity, Moon and fertility, daughter of Leto and Zeus, Apollo's twin sister. Artemis was one of the virgin goddesses and purity symbol of Olympus. She is compared to Diana in ancient Roman mythology. Artemis is drawn with a crescent above her forehead. She is seen as a hunter on coins holding a bow and arrow in hand.



**Picture 10:** *Artemis statue on some coins- sekkehgaz.com website*

Tishe: was goddess and symbol of Seleucia city and was seen on the coins as a lady having a crown with congress on her head most of the times. She does not have wing and often gives ring of kingdom or branch of date to king as a gift.



**Picture 11:** *Blansh the third and goddess Tishe- Kumis museum of stamps and coins – Semnan*

Anahita: Anahita or Anahid is goddess of water and rain and fertilization in ancient Iranian religion. Most of her properties are close to Ishtar who was worshiped by the Semites, including the Babylonians. Apparently Anahita was related to warfare and it was believed that she helped the champions who made sacrifices for her in war against enemy. It should be noted Anahita is shown with symbol of Moon and star on coins.



**Picture 12:** *Statue of moon and star symbol of Anahita in Parthian coins- Kumesh museum of stamp and coin – Semnan*



In investigating one of the coins acquired from Alimayian Satrapi in Parthian era, statue of a standing person and probably a woman or in a better guessing statue of goddess Nanaya who was much respected among Alimayian on back of the coin in minted.



**Picture 13:** Zoomed picture of goddess Nanaya book of Alimayian coins  
*Pakyazdan*



**Picture 14:** Kamanskyrs the third's dirham coin  
*book of Alimayian coins-Pakzadiyan.*

Kamanksarys the fourth and Anzazeh: another coin with queen's statue next to king statue that has word of Anzazeh (queen) on the back, belongs to Kamanskyr the fourth.



**Pictue 15:** King Kamanksarys the fourth and Anzazeh  
*book of Alimayian coins-Pakzadiyan.*

Statue of Orod the second's queens: in Orod the second's coins, on the back of coin statues of queens are seen.





**Picture 16:** *Coins of Orod the second- book of Alimayian coins-Pakzadiyan*

Orod the fifth: generally coins of Orod the fifth had statue on face of each site of coin and the statues on the back of coin were different which tells us maybe this king had several wives. In the back of some coins on the face of queen word OULFAN" 𐭮𐭥𐭥𐭥" is written. Some of the professionals have considered it a queen title.



**Picture 17:** *Coin of Orod the fifth with statue and the writing says queen*

*Oulfan- book of Alimayian coins-Pakzadiyan*

Orod the sixth: on the backside of Orod the sixth coins statue of queen with elegance has considerable difference with coins of the same style.



**Picture 18:** *Orod the sixth and statue of her wife- book of Alimayian coins-Pakzadiyan*

Orod the seventh: in his coins king's wife statue is minted on back of the coin having a special crown.



**Picture 19:** *Orod the seventh and his wife- book of Alimayian coins-Pakzadiyan*



**Picture 20:** *Unknown king- goddess Artemis on back of the coin-- book of Alimayian coins- Pakzadiyan*

Sassanid (224 A.D. – 651 A.D.): Sassanid ruled in Iran since 224 A.D. until 651 A.D. (427 years). Ardeshir established the foundation for a unified kingdom. Sassanid was the last pre-Islamic rule in Iran.

Picture of Bahram the second's wife: Another queen whose statue is minted on coin is Bahram the second's wife. He married Dokhtak heir of Shapour the first in year 275 A.D at the same year of his crowning. In these coins king and queen are minted and a hat decorated by big gems and on its forehead pictures of animals' head which are symbols of gods and angels of Zoroastrianism is seen. Queen's name is written on the coin as below:

Shapouri dokhak queen of queens:

Shahpuri dokhtak zi malakian malakt:



**Picture 21:** *Silver Dirham of bahram the second and queen Shapourdokht. Kumesh Information bank stamp and coin- Semnan*

In this age one of the most important political coins was coin of Bahram the second and queen and prince that had political and advertising aspects. On the back of coin statue of firebox guard who is exceptionally queen or goddess giving ring of power to king is minted.



**Picture 22:** *Triple coin of Bahram the second, queen and prince. History and calendar book in Sassanid coins. Pakzadiyan.*

Statue of goddess Anahita and Khosrow Parviz: another coin is minted referred to Khosrow Parviz and goddess Anahita. It is said that researchers made a mistake introducing her as goddess Anahita. This goddess as it is obvious on its picture is god Bahram. God of fire and victory and war and this concept is in harmony with topic of the coin which was minted as a memorial of victory.



**Picture 23:** Coin of Khosrow Parviz - information bank of Kumesh stamps and coins museum-Semnan

Bourandokht: was the first woman who became ruler in Iran and minted coin with her own statue. In Sassanid age she was a prince named Buran. Lady Pourandokht (Buran, Pouran in Persian) Sassanid ruler was Khosrow Parviz's second daughter. The remaining coins from Bourandokht are dated to her first, second and third year of reign. Bouran was crowned at 629 A.D. and her reign ended by the year 630 A.D. According to Sebeous, she sat on the crown in spring of year 630 A.D. after Shahrouraz the stealer of crown died. Some historians say her ruling period was one year and 6 months where as others say it was one year and 4 months.

There are gold silver and copper coins from Bouran time showing numbers of three years on them. Statue of Bouran's face's right side with weaved hair on both side of head and beautiful crown with hawk feather in middle was minted on the coin and there are two outstanding circles around the statue. On four side of the coin statue of moon crescent and star (symbol of goddess Anahita) is minted and her name is written in front of king's face in Pahlavi script. On the back of the coin moon and star symbol can be seen (Pakzadiyan, Coin Periodical).



**Picture 24:** *Bourandokht face on the coin- information bank of Kumesh stamp and coin museum- Semnan*

Azarmidokht: queen Azarmi dokht, Azarm, Azarmi (630 A.D or 631 A.D)( meaning a girl never gets old) Iranian woman ruler and 32th king of Sassanid, Khosrow parviz's daughter, after her sister Pourandokht died her army chose Azarmidokht as ruler in Ctesiphon. She ruled 4 months. She minted coins with statue of man but in her own name. It is possible she did this because of her deep love for her father Khosrow Parviz. Some of Azarmidokht coins are exactly like the last ten years of Khosrow the second. In place of king Azarmidokht name is mined like "Azarmik Dokht" and all coins is from first year of reign and all belong to Ctesiphon and Shiraz mint. Some of Azarmidokht coins are minted having a statue without beard and mustache.



**Picture 25:** *Azarmidokht's Dirham, first year. Information bank of Kumish stamps and coins museum- Semnan*

After Islam: in Islamic long history. Power was in hand of heredity kings or powerful conquerors; women got the power depending on conditions of time and place they lived in. in Iran after Islam whether before the arrival of Turkish and Mongol dynasties or later depending on rules of women's rights, some of kings' wives or daughters were getting the power who will be introduced below:

Seljuks: Seljuk, Seljuk heir, the name of the Turkic dynastic centuries (5 and 6 AD), ruled large parts of West Asia and Iran.

Statue of sun on coin of Keikhosrov (second) ebne Keyqobad: Ghiaseddin Keikhosrov ben Keiqobad(second) was the 12th king of Seljuks king line and since 1237 A.D. until his death in 1246 ruled over the Seljuk sultans territory. Keikhosrov the second was son of Keiqobad the first. Ghiyasuddin's wife, who was known among the Seljuks to the "Georgian lady", had considerable influence on her husband. After marriage, Keikhosrov Ghiyasuddin against the rules of Islam, ordered to have a common image of he and his wife inscribed on the coins.

Then under pressure of religious authorities he was forced to stop minting his wife's image on coins and he commanded to mint lion and sun emblem on coins. He wanted to liken his wife's privilege position and beauty to the sun by this act.



**Picture 26:** Coin of Keikhosrow II- information bank of Kumeshtamp and coin museum- Semnan

Trakina Khatun: in her coins we see statue of Trakina khatun minted in shape of a hunter holding a bow in her hand riding a horse which shows her place as a hunter to show her power. At that time Mongols had little commitment to the Islamic agreements and did not see an obstacle to multiply human and animal motifs.



**Picture 27:** Terakina khatun- great Mongols-Caucasus- Stephan album website.

Bani Boragh/ Qarakhatayids (1222 A.D. -1306 A.D.): Atabak Hajeb Qarakhatayi was one of Qiyasudding, son of Kharazmshah, commanders who ruled Kerman in recess period. After distinction of salukis was confirmed by Oktay Gaan and received the title Gotlogh Khan. With dismissal of Qutbaldin Shah Jahan by Oljayto in 1306 A.D., their territory was occupied by Ilkhans. Their coins were minted in Kerman mint.

Torkan Khatun: is the fourth king of Qotolq government in Kerman. Qutb al-Din spared his obedience to the king by no means during his life. Therefore Holaku gave reign of Kerman to his children but since they were so young Qotloq chose Qutb al din's wife, Torkan, to rule Kerman and provide comfort to people on behalf of her children. Qotloq Sultan was a righteous woman and made all efforts for land development, welfare of the people, encouraged scholars and respected for the scholars and built charitable buildings. She put all

offshore and land work of Kerman in order. Torkan Khatun ruled on behalf of her children until (1268 A.D.) when she was ordained herself but after Hojaj sultan left Kerman (1284 A.D.) she ruled in the name of king inside the Kerman borders. She minted coins in her name. It is written on the coins "Alhamdulillah La Ilaha illa Allah Muhammad rasulullah ismato aldino dunya Qotloq" and on the back of the coin "Qaan supreme king of Ilkhan world long live his territory".



**Picture 28:** *Torkan Khatun's coin – personal collection.*

Safuh al din Padeshah Khatun: Padshah Khatun was one of the Qotlog kings and the fifth Muslim woman ruler. She was doing justice. When she sat on the throne of Kerman honored scholars and tried to improve their lives. Also, beauty, politeness and her extraordinary talent during life was lasting well after her death. She was a skilled calligrapher and author of the style. Apart from all these qualities, she was gilding and decorating the old poems and wrote them skillfully with her hands. She illuminated many copies of the Quran. It can be said she was among the prominent writers of her day.

At picture30, King Khatun coin, it is written on the coin the word shahadatein "Alhamdulillah La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammad Rasulullah" and on the back it says "King of the Supreme of the world God king Khatun".



**Picture 29:** *Coin of king Khatun – personal collection.*

Abash Khatun from Atabaks of Fars or Salgharians (1263 A.D. – 1285 A.D.): Tribe of Turkmen commanded by Sanger came along Seljuk to Iran and got the power in the Fars region. The last king of this dynasty was Abash Khatun who married Mango son of Holaku and then the Fars territory was Ilkhans. Coins of gold, silver and copper belonged to the family were minted in Shiraz. Abash Khatun was a Turkish woman, and in years of (1263-



1285 AD) in the Fars region was officially recognized as the Salghryan government king. Abash Khatun was daughter of Sa'ad the second and was heir of Qotloq rulers of Kerman from mother side. Her mother was Bibi Torkan. Her grandmother was one of Boraghe Hajeb's four daughters. Abash Khatun in years (1263 AD) became king by order of Holaku like men without the slightest problem, and the sermon was read to her name in Friday pray and coins was minted. On the image 31 of the coin: in the front of coin we can see the word of shahadatein "Alhamdulillah La Ilaha illa Allah Muhammad rasulullah Abash bente sa'ad" and on the back it says "righteous Gaan Abaqa world permanent king".



**Picture 30:** *Abash Khatun's coin- personal collection.*

There is another coin from this king with the six-pointed star inside it "Atabak Abash" on the back of the coin says "Sultan Alam Abaqa".



**Picture 31:** *Abash Khatun's coin- Kumesh museum of stamp and coin- Semnan*

Dolat Khatun: during 1100s-1500s A.D., two governments were formed among tribes that lived in the South West of Iran, one of them was the great Lor (Hezar aspiyan) or Fozuliye and the other one was government of small Lor atabaks or Bani khorshid. Dolat Khatun was succeeded as the fourth king of the Bani khorshid. She could not be in power for a long time because she was not the ruler of an independent state but was Atabak of a semi-autonomous government of the powerful Mongol Empire. For this reason, he could not prevent the intervention of the elders of Mongol government in the territory and the people were tired of the Mongols. Dolat Khatun was not as mighty king as was Turkan Khatun the ruler of Kerman. On the other hand, because of her obsess to be hidden she could not solve the government problems. At this time Abusaeedkhan Bahador became ruler of Ilkhans. Dolat Khatun, due to the Mongols government pressure and fear of losing independence of small



Lor which was important due to the precious mines, with approval of Mongol's court gave the throne to his brother Izze al din Hussein. No coin is reported from her. Should be noted rulers of great Lor and small Lor did not mint their name officially on the coins and it is possibly the reason why no coin exist in this lady's name.

King Satibeig of Ilkhanis: in 16th century from Ilkhans who were a Muslim branch of Mongol empire a woman named Satibeig was ruling. Princess Satibeig announced herself as king in Tabriz. Chose Rukn-al-din Sheikh Rashidi and Ghiasuldin Muhamad Ali Shah as minister (Sheykh Oveys history page 67). Satibeig did not show any activity to reach the throne. She passed her political life in a period of chaos in a tumultuously region. While two mighty rulers were fighting over the crown they used Ilkhani princes to reach their political aims.

She has written on the coins that were minted as signs of her kingdom these words: "Righteous king Samibeig Khan long live her territory". Sharafkhan has mentioned sermon reading for her in Sharafnameh book.



**Picture 32:** *Satibeigi coin with her name written on it- personal collection.*

In other coin of Satibeigi we witness presence of sun. Considering her woman face it may represent ruling of a woman as a symbol.



**Picture 33:** *Satibeigi's coin with symbol of light – personal collection.*

Dondu Khatune of Jalayer: in history, Jalayeis who were a big branch of Mongols, like other Mongols intermingled with Turks in Turkestan and In Qipchaq. Dondu Khatun is the only woman of Jalayeris who sat on the throne. And there is no coin reported from her.

### 3. Conclusion

Considering investigations have been done we can say in pre-Islamic era in Iran, presence of women statues on the coins mostly had political and advertising aspect. Rulers of time under the pretext of policy or advertisement minted coins with queens' statues and in some cases women rulers had to accept the power depending on political and advertising conditions but they ceded the throne in a short time. We can see presence of goddesses' statues on coins which can be effect of other nation's beliefs and faiths in most of the cases. After Islam, statue and pictures of animal and human were prevented in art or minting coin. After attack of Mongols, in Ilkhani's era lots of women took the power after death of their husbands and absence of an heir, considering their familial positions and by marrying courtiers. This tribe had a little belief in Islamic rules and sometimes used human or animal symbols in minting coin or other arts. In this era we see entrance of sun statue in coins as a symbol that represents presence of women and was used in other times as the national symbol until Pahlavi time.

Citing to sample of available coins we understand presence of women on coins, whether before Islam or after Islam was for two reasons:

- 1- Depending on beliefs and faiths in that era by statues of goddesses
- 2- Depending on political aspects of era

Even the times women were selected as rulers, it had political aspect and sometimes they accepted it unwillingly and were on throne for a short time. Presence of women in all times of Iran was in a lesser place than men and mostly was because of answering believing needs and getting to political aims in that era.

Presence of women in coins is classified to groups below:

Before Islam: - Goddesses: (Athena- Medusa-Nike- Anahita and...)

- Queens of kings: (Anzazeh- Mouza-Shapourdokht)
- Ruling women: (Bourandokht- Azarmidokht)

After Islam: - Women who sat on Throne because their husband was king and there was no heir after his death: (Torkan khatun- Dondu khatun- Satibeig)

- Women who got power because of their familial background: (Padeshah Khatun and AbashKkhatun daughters of Torkan Khatun)

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