

*Original Paper*

# Horse Archetype and Its Relationship with Hero Patterns on Luster Pottery in the Seljuk

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## **Abstract**

*Horse with the hero archetype are the most common mythological motif. In Jung's opinion, archetypes are collective unconscious contents which potentially exist in the human's mind; therefore, myth is not limited to the time and space. The pattern of horse and horseman was used on pottery and in wall paintings, paintings and drawings throughout the history. This kind of pattern is observed frequently on different artworks of the Seljuk Period (Eleventh and twelfth centuries AD). During the 10th century, due to various events, the Oghuz had come into close contact with Muslim cities. Seljuk Turks had a strong interaction with the nature. They fought with their neighbors to find suitable permanent pastures; so, war and hunting were their favorite works and subjects. One of the artworks on which these patterns were frequently used was golden shades and enamel pottery in the Seljuk Period. Pottery in this period is important in terms of its qualitative and quantitative value. In this article, first we address Jung's opinions about the hero and horse pattern as an archetype; then, by introducing some samples of golden shades pottery with the pattern of horse and horseman, we will discuss the concept which the Seljuk society had understood.*

## **Keywords**

*Archetype, horse, hero, luster pottery, the Seljuk*

## **1. Introduction**

Pottery was an appropriate place for the formation and expression of the artistic creativity of humans throughout the history. The Seljuk period is one of the most brilliant cultural periods of Iran in which different arts such as weaving, architecture, metalworking and especially pottery reached their maximum success (Rahimi, 1989, p. 55). Luster pottery' production technique was confined to Iraqi potters for several years. They avoid propagating this technique. In fact, the steps of producing the

luster pottery were preserved among them as a secret (Grube, 1965, p. 211). One of the sources which significantly important for the luster pottery production technique is “Arayes-al-Jawaher va Atayeb-Alnafayes” article written by Abolghasem Abdollah Kashani and corrected by Iraj Afshar (Kashani, 1966, p. 16). The parental family and brothers of Abolghasem were all engaged in tile working. He compiled this book in 1300 (AD) (Kashani, 1966, p. 16). Luster is a special type of decorative technique consisting of silver and copper nanoparticles dispersed within the glassy matrix of the ceramic glaze (Padovani et al., 2006; Borgia et al., 2004; Shokouhi et al., 2002). The decoration produces brilliant metallic reflections of different colors, sometimes accompanied by iridescent or dichroic effects (Caiger-Smith, 1985, p. 55). For producing the luster pottery, the pottery was first heated and glazed with a normal method; then, the pattern on the glaze was cooled down, was painted by a combination of sulfur, silver oxide and copper oxide as well as yellow or red ocher flower and was placed inside the vinegar. The pottery was heated again in a furnace with lower temperature (a furnace with carbon monoxide atmosphere, wet fuel and limited air tank). Then, the ocher color was gradually removed from the pottery’s surface and the glaze’s pattern was fixed with a metal form shining (Tohidi, 2003, p. 274). The main production centers of luster pottery were Rayy, kashan, Jorjan and Saveh which had special methods for decoration and formation of patterns (Kuhnel, 1970, p. 102; Lane, 1947, p. 27). Yadmani style of luster pottery in Rayy is among the best styles in Iranian art of pottery which the traditions of Sassanid Empire are repeated in them (Atil, 1973, p. 17). All vessels with this kind of decoration are obtained from Rayy (Pope, 1939; 1789). In Rayy luster pottery, use of many designs is avoided and sometimes, it is observed that a wide space of the vessel is left without any design and pattern, and in some cases, the human pattern is separated with geometric and scroll-like designs from other patterns (Karimi, & Kiani, 1985, p. 49). Kashan luster pottery has compact patterns and human pictures are drawn with a round face and almond eyes (Feheravari, 1973, p. 43).

## **2. The Symbolic Pattern of Horse**

Symbol is a term, name or even an image which indicates a familiar thing in the daily life and more importantly represents an implicit meaning(s) (Ahmadi, 2005, p. 365). Horse was very important among Iranian peoples so that it was considered to be a mythological creature and a heaven gift. Different horse and horseman patterns were drawn on the cave walls, boss patterns, seals and potteries. In ancient sources and letters, physical features, and temper and traits of horses are addressed. These features include the body hair color, and special signs in different areas of the horse’s body. The most famous sign is the white stain on the horse’s forehead. This white stain is compared with the moon or a star that is stamped on the horse’s forehead (Azarmoosh, 1988, p. 100). Another sign is “Gardna” which means circle. Whenever in different areas of the horse’s body, hair grows in the opposite direction, different small and big shapes are emerged which are called “Gardna or Circle”. Some other terms are used for these circles, including Gohar Sare, Akhar Neshan, Khojaste, Neyzipay, and Darvash Khare (Fakhr Modabber, 1967, pp. 223-225). In ancient stories of the creation, horse is the physical

manifestation of the creator and the angel of sun, and also is one of the manifestations and appearances of the possible world (Ghaemi & Yahaghi, 2009, pp. 10-26). The Pegasus is the sign of the sun, and the flying horse shows Gods' throne and the emergence of science and intelligence (Figure 1).

The white horse is the symbol of masculinity and power, is the confidant of believer waters and knows the underground direction of waters. Horse is the symbol of Tishtar which Yasht 8 of Avesta is in his name. Izad Tishtar is the representative of rain in the religious beliefs of Mazdisnan (Yasht 8, Paragraphs 8, 38; Bundahišn Hindi, 1989: Section5, Paragraph 16) which his praise history dates back to Indo-Iranian period (Molaie, 2007, p. 459). In fact, it reflects the more ancient myth in the ancient Iran (Boyce, 1975, p. 79). Horse is also the symbol of the planet mars. Great Iranian mystics in the symbolic literature considered the horse as a superior sky passing vehicle. In lyrical and epic literature, horse is described as having the nobility and good habits and is the source of reunion of lovers, devotees and the end of the separation and boredom period (Mahouzi, 1998, p. 210). In Jung's opinion, horse is an example which is seen frequently in the myths and folk tales, and represents non-human spirit and animal aspect and consequently is unconscious. Horse in folk tales sometimes sees perspectives, hears voices and talks. When the horse trots and jumps it is considered to be related to the darkness of the evil world. Horse has a close relationship with the mother archetype, and shows the lower part of the body and animal motives resulted from this part. Like all instinctive creatures which lack a superior consciousness, it is subjected to unnecessary fears. In addition, it is related to magic spells. Specially, the midnight black horse is the symbol of death courier. Jung considers the meaning of horse equivalent with the meaning of "mother" with a slight difference. Mother represents the origin of life and horse represents the purely animal life of the body (Jung, 1964, p. 27).

### **3. The Hero Archetype**

The hero archetype is related to the very ancient time, and the most common and the most known myths. Hero is a person who is at the center of attention with prominent moral traits and physical admirable characteristics. Hero is considered to be a human better than ordinary humans and is the symbol of the unity of celestial and earthly forces (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, p. 486). Hero has the traits of sun and supernatural powers that can overcome the passionate tendencies of his nature and the darkness and coldness of death through the light and heat (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, p. 490). In general, symbols of a hero are expressed when his ego and self are further strengthened, i.e. when the consciousness cannot take an action alone or at least without the help of the power source which is in the unconscious, it needs the unconscious (Jung, 1964, p. 181). The main task of the hero myth is the development of himself, i.e. awareness of his weaknesses and abilities so that he can overcome his life difficulties. As soon as the person passed the first test and entered the maturity stage, the hero myth loses his appropriateness (Jung, 1964, p. 164). In most cultures, heroes reach immortality, can rise from their graves and fight against their homeland enemies (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, p. 487). Stories related to heroes include moral advices and talk about persons who are under the attention of people,

due to their intelligence, power and courage. These stories are about the miraculous birth of a hero, the extraordinary power, fast growth of power and superiority, and the successful struggle against the evil forces (Jung, 1964, p. 162). The hero myth is a very powerful or God-like man who overcomes evils such as dragon, snake, demon and Satan, and frees his people from corruption and death. Narration or repetition of scriptures and religious ceremonies with dances, songs, praises and sacrifices led to the stimulation of divine emotions (like the charm of a magic) and made persons feel like a hero (Jung, 1964, p. 112). In many hero myths, backup powers or guardians compensate the initial inability of the hero and make him to complete his actions (Jung, 1964, p. 164). In these myths, the demon is surrendered by the hero, like Jonah who was swallowed by a fish (Jung, 1964, p. 176). War between the hero and dragon is the more active form of this myth and makes the context of the archetype more clear which is the victory of self over regressive tendencies. In general, the following characteristics can be mentioned for heroes:

- 1) As hero myths are the sons of God and Goddess, and are blessed by God, they have an extraordinary power to fight with destructive and evil forces (Eliade, 1987, p. 302).
- 2) Fighting with enemies is a kind of ritual behavior and there is no kindness in it.
- 3) Hero myths are generally stronger than others and have more power and the best war weapons as well as the fastest means of transportation.
- 4) These heroes have a symbolic and special cloth and costume.

#### **4. Anti-Hero**

Anti-hero is a person who lacks good characteristics, merits and moral virtues, and is the opposite of the hero (Dad, 1992, p. 181). In fact, his thoughts, actions and behaviors are opposite of the hero (Yousefi et al., 2007, p. 44). Anti-hero is divided into 4 main categories:

- 1) Human anti-heroes (human characters who fight with heroes and finally fail)
- 2) Animal anti-heroes
- 3) Natural anti-heroes (including natural elements and phenomena such as coldness, heat, etc.)
- 4) Supernatural anti-heroes (that have an extraordinary ability and take actions which are beyond the scope of power of humans) such as demons, witches, dragons and supernatural animals (Yousefi et al., 2007, pp. 46-51).

#### **5. The Horse and Horseman Patterns on Luster Pottery**

According to Jung, one of the reasons that humans drew pictures about the hunting scene, enthralling others, horse riding, sexual intercourse, etc. was the exact similarity of the living creature with its spirit. It means that whatever is drawn in the picture must happen to the animal, too (Jung, 1977, p. 358). It seems that according to the nomadic and hunting nature of the Seljuk, this kind of thought was common in that period (Azhand, 2010, p. 85). Kings in that period were the great supporters of different arts and industries. Artists drew the picture of horsemen and heroes in their artworks including

Varqa u Gulshāh manuscript to attract the attention of Seljuks princes and kings. This manuscript is kept in Topkapi Saray Museum in Istanbul which encompasses 70 rectangular pictures, is the good representative of Seljuk statue style and the only manuscript left from the Seljuk period in Iran. This manuscript affected the pottery of the Seljuk in many areas and included arabesques in some of its paintings as well as patterns of war, horsemen and physical features which were completely repeated in luster pottery. Some paintings of this manuscript are full of dynamics and motion. Symbolism and abstracting are dominant in all the paintings. One of the important issues which can be observed in many Seljuk vessels is the painting of kings while hunting, horse riding and victory over enemies. Turks were a nomadic and pastoralist race and were interacting with their nature. Their aesthetic perspective is under the influence of their nature. Nature and war are the origin of life for them; therefore, royal festivities, hunting, throne, war and horsemen are repeated in their pictures (Azhand, 2010, p. 85). Turkmen horses are among the famous horses which came with the Seljuk to the northeast of Iran and are elegant, tall and fast horses. The continuous repetition of this pattern on vessels shows the importance of this animal (Azarnoosh, 1988, p. 111). In Jung's opinion, any human has an integrity-oriented feeling, i.e. a very powerful and complete feeling of self which has an individuality mood (Jung, 1964, p. 192). This feeling of integrity and power was very high in the Seljuk, and drawing the pattern of horse riding made a sense of success and victory over the animal. In many pictures, the head of horse is downward to show its obedience. This obedience could be the wish and heart desire of its horseman which wanted to make it real by drawing this picture (Figure 2 & 3).

In Seljuk's paintings, physical features of the horse were significantly considered, including its color of body, short and woven tail and special signs. Lines of drawing the body of horse were delicate and beautiful, and evoked the dynamics, motion and power of the horse in the mind. Circle is one of the signs which were drawn on the body of horses on potteries. In letters, these lines were called "Gardna" which were hair that grew in the opposite direction on different parts of the horse body and created different small and big patterns (Fakhr Modabber, 1967, pp. 223-225). In most of Seljuk pottery studied, these circles are observed on the body of horse, but in samples under study, not only circles cover the whole body, but also show the whole mind with all its aspects, including the relationship between human and nature (Jung, 1964:365) and encompass concepts such as perfection, integration, creativity, symbol of the universe, representative of sun and consequently eternity and a sign of time and continuous circular motion of sky which also has a relationship with divinity. We should not underestimate the continuous emergence of the circle and it seems that a mental need wants to attract the attention of consciousness toward basic elements of life by symbolizing these patterns (Jung, 1964, p. 379). By drawing these circles, they probably showed the holiness of horsemen and heroes or their perfection and therefore their immortality (Figure 4).

The pattern of a horseman was sometimes drawn alone as the main subject on vessels and sometimes it was used in combination with animals, human patterns, mythical creatures and sphinxes (Figure 5-9). In the pottery under study, the color of horse is light near white. The white horse is the confidant of

believer waters and sphinxes—creatures with the head of human and body of lion—and is the sign of splendor and abundance promise, spring blessing and staying away from the recession and cold winter (Abed Doost & Kazempour, 2009, pp. 81-91). In Figure 9, sphinxes have the role of supporter of heroes. The hero fulfills his obligations with their help. They were signs of victory, prosperity and happiness for the Seljuk (Figure 9).



**Figure1. The Pattern of a Flying Horse, Metropolitan Museum, New York (www. Metmuseum.org)**



**Figures 2&3. Some Pages of Varqa u Gulshāh Manuscript, Work of Abdolmomen Khoei, the Seljuk Period (Raof, 2012)**



**Figure 4. The Luster Jar, the Mostazafan Foundation (Foundation of the Oppressed) (Raof, 2012)**



**Figures 5 & 6. Luster Bowl and Pitcher, the Mostazafan Foundation (Foundation of the Oppressed) (Raof, 2012)**





**Figures 7 & 8. Luster Earthenware, the Mostazafan Foundation (Foundation of the Oppressed) (Raof, 2012)**



**Figure 9. Luster Bowls, the Mostazafan Foundation (Foundation of the Oppressed) (Raof, 2012)**

## 6. Discussion

Iranian pottery is an important document for understanding the art of this country. The Seljuk pottery was the clear picture of painting of the period and also was under the influence of Varqa u Gulshāh manuscript. In these paintings, the following features are observed: Dynamics and motion, symbolism and abstracting, birds such as falcon and maybe pigeon with warriors, type of horse's movement, their preparation such as woven tail or in some cases short tail, saddle, and spots on the body of horse. These paintings were repeated on potteries without any change. Therefore, royal festivities, hunting, throne, war and horsemen were repeated in pictures of this period. The pattern of a horseman is the sign of victory and glory. Not only is the horseman dominant over his position, but also is dominant over the enemy force. According to the fact that the Seljuk were nomadic races who recently started to conquer other countries and the feel of dominance over other lands and obtaining more resources and wealth



was flamed inside them, and according to Jung, as any human being has an integrity-oriented feeling and heroic signs are expressed when the self needs to be more strengthened, this feeling of integrity and power was very high in the Seljuk, and drawing patterns of horse riding created a sense of success and victory over the animal. Therefore, the abundance of these patterns in this period could not be without any logical reason and absolutely decorative. By drawing circles on different parts of horses and horsemen, the Seljuk showed their holiness and or perfection and finally, they considered the immortality of heroes.

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