

# Introduction to a unique Archer Soldier Statue found at Kalmakareh cave, Lurestan, Iran

**Leila Khosravi**

Assistant Professor, Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (ICAR), Tehran, Iran

**Email address:**

[l.khosravi57@gmail.com](mailto:l.khosravi57@gmail.com)

**To cite this article:**

Leila Khosravi. Introduction a Unique Archer Soldier Statue Found at Kalmakareh Cave, Lurestan, Iran. *International Journal of Archaeology*. Vol. 1, No. 3, 2013, pp. 34-39. doi: 10.11648/j.ija.20130103.11

---

**Abstract:** Kalmakareh treasure was discovered in 1989 by a local hunter. the Kalmakareh cave, is about 20 km to the northwest of Pol-e Dokhtar, Lurestan Province. The collection is consisted of different metal objects including vessels, rhytons, animal and human figurines, masks, plaques, adornments and etc. The presence of neo-Elamite scripts on some artifacts makes it unickly easy to date. The names on the scripts indicates a close connection to the cultural horizon of Neo-Elamite period. The inscriptions deciphered by Lambert, Vallat and Bashash alongside with archaeological analysis by the author revealed a new unknown local dynasty in Lurestan, concurrent with neo-Elamite period; which opens a new discussion in investigating archaeological issues and art history of this period in western Iran. Discovered objects are mostly made of silver. It is here aimed to introduce, discuss and investigate one of the particular human statue of the mentioned collection. This small statue, which is now in the museum of Falak-Al Aflak castle, was made by casting method and then decorated by chasing. Here we try to recognize the statue's motives, its comparisons and then we will have som further interpretations. Objects are show a local tradition affected by different exotic issues, especially those of Elam and Assyria.

**Keywords:** Human Statues, Archer Soldier, Kalmakareh Cave, Pol-e Dokhtar, Lurestan, Neo-Elamite

---

## 1. Introduction

Historical background of Elamite realm and also recently discovered precious neo-Elamite treasures are known as two important topics which desire further attention by researches who are interested in metallurgy and ancient arts. Although ancient metallurgy has been numerously investigated, more studies required to understand metalwork related to the neo-Elamite period.

About 24 years ago, when a local hunter was looking after a game, suddenly he faced a valuable treasure belonging to a locally unknown dynasty, Samati, in the Kalmakareh cave. Unfortunately, the treasure was mostly looted and smuggled all around the world, albeit a few objects are now preserved in the Iranian museums. The remained objects open a new discussion about the existing of previously unknown dynasty, which has not been known in archaeological or historical sources before. Largely because of paucity of written data indicating such dynasty.

Materials from Kalmakareh, Arjan and Ramhormoz show a continuation in Iranian-Elamite art (Henkelman 2002:14), although mistakenly Kalmakareh finds have been

attributed to Anatolian or Syrian art in some accunts.

This article aims to introduce and analyze both form and function of a unique statue among the Kalmakareh collection; archaeologically, it is also discussed that the statue shows an Iranian artifact made in the Lurestan region. Obviously, investigating artifacts is crucial as they are not only known as archaeological finds but also they carry information for scrutinizing ancient thoughts, beliefs, industry, art, subsistence patterns, religious affairs. Moreover, the recently discovered precious treasures from the Neo-Elamit period in the Iranian plateaue emphasize the possibility of clarifying historical geographies, arts, believes and religious cults of the mountainous regions which have been influenced by Elamite dynasties. The main tasks of this article consist of tracking out the nature of form, production technique and function of the object and its comparisons. By an analytic inductive and comparative method and utilizing historical texts, we are about to understand human statue.

## 2. Etymology and Geographical Position of Kalmakareh Cave

Kalmakareh consists of two words “*Kalma*” and “*karreh*” that the first in Lakī dialect means “cave” or the place of “*kal*” (goat) and “*karreh*” with stress on /r/ means “fig” (Izadpanāh 1988:104). This area is covered with fig trees and such a nomination for the cave is probably due to the same reason.

Kalmakareh Cave has located at 20 km northwest of Pol-e Dokhtar Town in Lurestān Province. Pol-e Dokhtar that has located in the south of Lurestān and furthest south of Zagros Mountains is considered as one of the important regions. The unique position of this town led to play a significant role in communications between the inhabitants of the khozestan Plain and of mountain settlers of the Central Zagros from ancient to the present time.



Fig 1. Geographical Position of Kalmakareh Cave

## 3. The Statue of Archer Soldier



Fig 2. silver statue discovered from kalmakareh cave

To document Kalmakareh objects, based on form and function, the author classified them into simple vessels, decorative vessels, spouted vessels, bowls and situla, rhytons, human and animal statues, adornments and ritual and symbolic artifacts. However, a human statue is prominently seen which made of silver and shows a soldier stringing a bow; it is stood on a flat surface with 4.5 cm in height and 2.5 cm in width. Statue was delicately molded and then decorative details were engraved. Head and feet are represented in profile but body in frontal, an issue which is reminiscent of Assyrian tradition in the reliefs. The human is figured with large eyes and long beard which decorated by wavy shapes and small circles similar to decorations seen on the reliefs of Assyrian gods. Hairs fall on the shoulders and contain wavy decorations. The statue's figure is similar to Assyrian men. The young and wide society of Assyrian empire was mainly consisted of aggressive men who were even looking for booty (Maleki 1961: 34).

As depicted on their reliefs, Assyrian men are shown with frontal face, wide eyebrows, large almond shape eyes, curved nose, bold chin and thick lips (Behzadi 1993:350), and they have long hairs and curled rectangular shape beard (Behmanesh 1960:122). Curled hair is seen in western areas, particularly northern Syria, and with fewer samples in Assyrian empire during the 9th- 7th centuries BC. Such hair style is also recorded in earlier periods across the Near East (Muscarella 1980:205). The Assyrian hair and beard styles widespread into many near and far lands. In Assyrian empire, the beard length was known as an indicator of social status. So, those who were classified as common people or belonged to a low class, such as soldiers, had a shorter beard (Majidzadeh 2000:104). However, the silver statue is dressed by a short cloth, a knee-length tunic, with long sleeve and scalloped fringe at the lower end; a wide belt is seen at the waist while torso is decorated by two circles and bands.



Fig 3. A sample of Assyrian hair style in the reliefs (<http://www.britishmuseum.org>)

Based on the resources, Assyrian army is divided into two groups:

- Cavalry troops who are beyond the scope of this discussion.
- Infantry troops who are shown in the Assyrian reliefs; they are themselves divided into two sub-

groups: light-armored men (archers, slingers), who were worn by a knee-length tunic, and heavy-armored men (lancers or spearmen) (Roux 1985:332).

By the time of Ashurnasirpal II, Assyrian army dressed by an under knee tunic and a shawl or belt which is folded several times round the trunk of the body. During the reign of Shalmaneser III, a new dress consisting of tight full-length short sleeve tunic was added to the preceding uniform cloth. This was ripped in the skirt to help to easier moving of soldiers; Tiglath Pileser, however, changed the army uniform to a knee-length tunic decorated with grid pattern and folded by shawl round the waist. A wide band, presumably made of leather, rounded the right shoulder obliquely tied to sword sheath. On the contrary side, a wide band, decorated with hachure, hanged down to under knee. We see six types of uniform belonging to different groups of army on a relief in Sargon palace at Khorsabad. During Sennacherib reign, wearing full-length tunic was abrogated and, in turn, a short dress came to use. Each group was marked by its own different decoration on the dress; some dresses were simple, but mostly decorated with wide band in the right side. Such samples are apparently seen in the scenes of Lakish war and Sennacherib's victory. Seemingly, prominent changes occurred in the army uniform in a time span lasted between the reigns of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal (Majidzadeh 1991:15).

In the 9th century BC, Assyrian soldiers usually dressed a knee-length tunic and appeared barefoot or with sandal. This is also true about northern Syrian soldiers. Barefoot soldiers are known as one of the earliest figures in the Near East (Muscarella 1980:192), though such representation is seen at all periods (De -Backer 2010:14). The archer soldier of Kalmakareh is also seen barefoot dressing a short fringed tunic similar to Hittites in Anatolia. But, scalloped pattern is invisible in Assyria. However, such Assyrian archers worn by short tunic could be seen in neo-Hittite art.

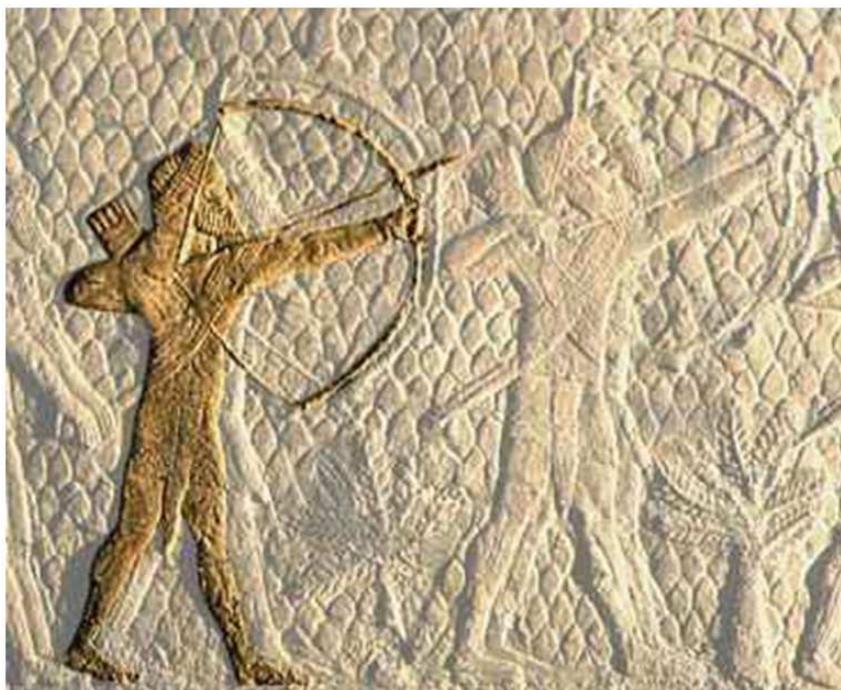
The similarity between Lurestan artifacts and Mittani decorations is also indicating their close artistic relations as various peoples were living across Near East with the same

historical, tribal and cultural backgrounds. This came to forth as military, tribal and cultural borders were not appeared. Mitanni art continued even after its political decline, mostly attracted by Assyrians and then others across Near East. Indeed, Assyrians were responsible to preservation and diffusion of Mittani art. In Ungnad's view, Subartu region, where later occupied by Assyrians, was the original homeland of Mittani peoples who were originally Hittites (Ravasani 1991:289-90). It seems that Kassites and some Hurians occupied highlands of western Iran as their homeland. What seems reasonable is that both Kassites and Hurians stemmed from highlands where had already been under the Elamite influence. Kassites then occupied Mesopotamia and deported some Hurians to there (Ibid:249). Written data indicated that Hattusilis III, the Hittite King, brought some sculptors from Babylon, where had close relation with Lurestan, to his capital. Some relations between Lurestan and Anatolia, therefore, could be inferred (Burney 1971:163).

As mentioned above, the statue of archer soldier of Kalmakareh appeared as barefoot, a similar element to Assyrian soldiers on the reliefs of Tiglath Pileser III; but, Julian Read believes that the depicted men were native people who were living in the highlands of Elam and Lurestan. As Senacherib attacked Elam and Lurestan, he defeated them heavily; as the result of the war, as seen on a relief, many people were deported from Ellippi to Assyria; however, an Ellippi man depicted on Ashurbanipal relief while renders Humban Haltash III and wears tapered boots. Such boot was an Ellippi costume though not very common (Read 1976:98). On the Senacherib's relief in Lakish, some archers seem to be Ellippi who were involved in Assyrian army (Ibid:99). It seems that archer statue was made in Lurestan indicating a combination of Assyrian and local traditions. In terms of dress and bow, a similar archer is seen on a metal slab from Ziwiye with a knee-length fringed tunic and a curved-shape bow. It should be noted that decorations on the slab were entirely affected by Assyrian art (Wilkinson 1960:221).



Fig 4. samples of male and female dresses in Hittites art (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/fotogezi/3100408082/>)



*Fig 5. An archer in the Assyrian reliefs (<http://www.britishmuseum.org>)*



*Fig 6. An archer in the Hittites reliefs (<http://www.artelista.com/en/great-masters/artwork/6267312155524551-neo-hittite-stone-relief-of-an-archer-c-9th-century-bc.html>)*

The bow of archer soldier of Kalmakareh have two duck's heads; this kind of bow is firstly seen in the Elamite period and then spread across Near East in the early 1st millennium BC. (Zutterman 2003:140); Bow which ended in duck's head was used in the time of five Achaemenid kings including Darius I, Xerxes, Ardashir I, Ardashir II and Ardashir III. However, it was applied by the king and particular army. Moreover, it is only seen in the scene of

bearing tributes and ceremonies at Persepolis and Naghsh-i Rostam and no practical usage in the war or hunting is assumed. Animal figures on the weapons might have been a continuation of Lurestan and Scythian art which might be related with ritual tradition of people. As seen on the reliefs of east stairs at Apadana palace, duck-headed bow was an Elamite tribute which was then adopted by Assyrians. On the Assyrian reliefs, for example on the reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II at north-west palace of Nimrud and Asurbanipal at north palace of Nineveh, soldiers are depicted with curved bow ending in two duck's heads (Madhloom 1970:58). Assyrian weapons and military tactics were those which had already been used in the late 2nd millennium BC. The main weapon is bow and archers would be accompanied by a shield bearer while slingers would aim to distract the enemy into lowering their shield to protect against the stones, thereby allowing the archers to shoot above their shield walls and slay their enemies. Such shields were made of willow wood and folded tightly by leather to become very strong. The combination of archer and shield bearer was the core of Assyrian infantry.

Therefore, Kalmakareh archer is known as an infantry soldier who dressed a knee-length tunic, a costume seen on the reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II and Asurbanipal. This small statue, which is now in the museum of Falak-Al Aflak castle, was made by casting method and then decorated by chasing. Lurestan's smiths were mainly affected by Assyrian art. It should be mentioned that inter-regional relations of Syria, southern Mesopotamia and Zagros increased by the time of falling Middle Assyrian kingdom during the reign of Tiglath Pileser I (Talai 1996:97). Truculence is apparently seen in the Assyrian art and natural elements are applied wildly. Although Lurestan's

artists were influenced by Assyrian art, however, they also motivated by their own surrounding nature. Assyrian art influenced succeeding periods, though it is itself based on Babylonian and Hittites art (Frye 1965:96).

As Assyrians used the productions of neighboring areas, it could be assumed that there some smiths who were occasionally employed by Assyrians. This caused a combined artificial production in Lurestan. Firstly, Assyrians influenced metal working in the late 8th millennium BC, an issue seemingly resulted from campaigns of Sargon II and Esarhaddon in the Zagros (Culican 1965:21). However, metal objects of Kalmakareh show a coherence between molding and decorating; they might have been produced locally, though Assyrian elements are also seen.

It is needed to say that similarities between artifacts of different tribes could imply that smiths were also involved as war booty and that they were working in multi-cultural workshops; in addition, the most powerful kingdom, namely Assyrians, have always played its individual role in the artificial traditions (Diakonoff 1956:372). Placing Assyrian motives within local traditions indicates that elites might have ever been looking for prestige symbols of their monarchical centers in the west (Marcus 1994:13). However, such objects reveal an Iranian dynasty with peculiar ideology (Brunner 1974:109).



Fig 7. An Achaemenid bow head (Ibid)



Fig 8. a neo-Assyrian bow head (Zutterman 2003: 140)



Fig 9. An Assyrian barefoot archer (Ibid)

## 4. Conclusions

This article tried to recognize the statue's motives, their comparisons and interpretations. Kalamakareh artificial style is enriched by symbols. Objects are not only premature and simple in form but also they show a local tradition affected by different exotic issues, especially those of Elam and Assyria. This indicates a close interaction between neighboring regions across the Near East.

Archaeological artifacts of Lurestan, however, resulted from cultural, ritual and tribal combination of migrant people. As Assyrians attacked western Iran, including Lurestan, it is most likely that Iron age III is coincided with their influence on arts across Iranian highlands. Indeed, metal objects of Kalmakareh show a coherence between molding and decorating; they must have been produced locally, though Assyrian elements are also visible.

Such prominent objects could indicate the splendor of Samati kingship; they show a culmination of metal working by which an easy access to mine is attested. Silver was locally extracted in Lurestan where examinations indicate an individual mine had ever been in use. It seems that Lurestan's smith made a statue by taken into account a combination of both internal and external (namely Assyrian) indications. Like others, the art of highland Zagros have taken steps from an initial spot toward the florescence and then declining. Florescence is seen in the first millennium BC. However, Local smiths made desired objects skillfully for their own customers such as kings, governors and elites who had different tribal and cultural backgrounds.

## References

- [1] Behmanesh, A. 1960, "The history of the ancient nations of Western Asia", Tehran: Tehran University press.(in persian)
- [2] Behzadi, R. 1993, "Assyrians", Chista Journal, No.4,5, year:11, Tehran: Ramin publication. (in persian)
- [3] Brunner, C, J. 1974, "Middle Persian Inscription Sasanian silner war", Metropolitan Museum of Art JNL, Vol 9, pp 109-121.

- [4] Burney, C.A. and Lang, D. M. 1971, "The people of the hills, Ancient Ararat and Caucasus", London: weidefeld and Nicolson.
- [5] Culican, W. 1965, "The Medes and persians", London: Thames & Hudson.
- [6] De-backer, F. 2010, "Neo-Assyrian siege redoubts tactics:some Issues", *Historiae*, No7, pp1-25.
- [7] Diakonoff, I. M. [Дьяконов, Игорь Михайлович]. 1956, "History of Media from the Ancient Times to the End of the IV Century B. C. E. [История Мидии от древнейших времен до конца IV в. до н.э.]", Moscow / Leningrad: Publishing House of the USSR Academy of Sciences [Москва / Ленинград: Изд-во Академии наук СССР], 485 pp.
- [8] Frye, R. N. 1965,"The Heritage of Persia", translated in to Persian by: Masud Rajabian, Tehran: B.T.N.K Publications. (in persian)
- [9] Henkelman, W.F.M. 2002, "Defining Neo Elamite History", pp1-17, [www.achemenet.com](http://www.achemenet.com).
- [10] Izadpanah, H. 1988, "Laki Culture", Jahangiri Institute Press, Tehran. (in persian)
- [11] Madhloom, T.A, 1970, The chronology of Neo-Assyrian art, University of London, The Athlone press.
- [12] Majidzadeh, Y. 1991,"Arjan Cup", Iranian Journal of Archaeology and History (Madjalle –ye Bastenshenasi Va Tarikh),No: 8-9, Iran University Press, pp11-26. (in persian)
- [13] -----, 2000,"History and Civilization of Mesopotamia(Art &Architecture), Vol:3, Tehran: Iran University Press. (in persian)
- [14] Maleki, Y, 1961," Situle A scene de banquet",Iranica Antiqua, Vol I , pp23- 41.
- [15] Marcus, M,I, 1994."Dressed to kill women and pins in early Iran", the oxford Art Journal, pp 3-15.
- [16] Muscarella, O.W, 1980, "The Catalogue of Ivories from Hasanlu,Iran", University museum monograph 40 (Hasanlu special studies), Vol:II, University of Pennsylvania Philadelphia press.
- [17] Ravasani, SH. 1991, "The great oriental community", Tehran: Amirkabir publication. (in persian)
- [18] Read, J. 1976, "Elam and Elamites in Assyrian sculpture", AMI, No 9, PP 96-106.
- [19] Roux, G, 1985, "The Ancient Iraq", Penguin Book Ltd.
- [20] Talai, H. 1996,"Iranian Art and Arcaeology The first Millennium B.C", Tehran: Samt publication. (in persian)
- [21] Wilkinson, C, k, 1960, "More details on ziwiyeh", Iraq, Vol XVI.
- [22] Zutterman, C, 2003,"The bow in the ancient near east, Are-evaluation of Archery from the late 2 Millennium to the end of the achaemenid empire", Iranica Antiqua, Vol XXXVIII, PP 119-165.
- [23] (<http://www.britishmuseum.org>)
- [24] (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/fotogezi/3100408082/>)
- [25] (<http://www.artelista.com>)