
INVESTIGATING THE REPRESENTATION OF THE LYDIAN DELEGATION IN THE RELIEFS OF THE EASTERN STAIRCASE OF APADANA (CASE STUDY: VESSELS AND JEWELLERY)¹

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ABSTRACT

The eastern staircase of Apadana – the Royal Achaemenid Audience Hall at Persepolis was decorated with numerous reliefs depicting various people subjected to the king's rule, paying homage and bringing gifts. Among these, the Lydian group is one of the delegations carved in the lower part of the staircase. This group was led by one of the officers of the Achaemenid court. The participants carried amphorae, bowls and armlets and were also bringing horses and a chariot. The amphorae and arm rings were represented distinctly with beautiful and unique animal decorations. The purpose of the following research was to identify the metal prototypes of the goods represented as carried by the Lydian group (amphorae, bowls, arm rings) and to illustrate them with artefacts housed in important museums of the world. This research was carried out by descriptive, analytical, comparative and field visit methods. It also used the method of referring to domestic museums and websites of foreign museums, reviewing documents and historical texts. The research concludes that the gifts carried by the Lydian group on the eastern staircase of Apadana, including amphorae, bowls and arm rings, had ceremonial usage, sometimes also being used in important court parties. Animal decorations in the form of griffins were used on the handles of amphorae and rings, which have their roots in the mythology of ancient Iran and other Achaemenid nations. Achaemenid artists developed it after modelling this type of decoration from other nations. This type of decoration (griffin) has been used to decorate jewellery, luxury items, seals, textiles, reliefs etc. The goods carried by the Lydian group as represented on the eastern staircase and some of its metal prototypes were used by the wealthy class of Iranian society in the Achaemenid period.

REZUMAT: INTERPRETĂRI ALE REPREZENTĂRII DELEGAȚIEI LYDIENE DIN RELIEFUL SCĂRII DE EST DIN APADANA (STUDIUL DE CAZ: VASE ȘI PODOABE)

Scara de est de la Apada – Sala de audiențe regale ahenenide de la Persepolis a fost decorată cu numeroase reliefuri înfățișând diferite persoane supuse domniei regelui, aducând omagiu și aducând daruri. Dintre acestea, grupul lidian este una dintre delegațiile sculptate în partea inferioară a scărilor. Acest grup era condus de unul dintre ofițerii curții ahenenide. Participanții purtau amfore, castroane și brățări pentru braț și aduceau, de asemenea, cai și un car. Amforele și brățările de braț au fost reprezentate distinct cu decorațiuni animale frumoase și unice. Scopul cercetărilor următoare a fost de a identifica prototipurile metalice ale mărfurilor reprezentate ca fiind transportate de grupul lidian (amfore, boluri, brățări de brațe) și de a le ilustra cu artefacte găzduite în muzee importante ale lumii. Această cercetare a fost realizată prin metode descriptive, analitice, comparative și vizite pe teren. De asemenea, a folosit metoda de referire la muzeele interne și site-urile web ale muzeelor străine, revizuirea documentelor și textelor istorice. Cercetările concluzionează că darurile purtate de grupul lidian pe scara de est de la Apadana, inclusiv amforele, castroanele și brățările de brațe, aveau uz ceremonial, uneori fiind folosite și la petrecerile importante ale curții. Pe mânerurile amforelor și pe brățări au fost folosite decorațiuni animale sub formă de grifoni, care își au rădăcinile în mitologia Iranului antic și a altor națiuni ahenenide. Artiștii ahenenizi l-au dezvoltat după modelarea acestui tip de decor provenit din cultura altei națiuni. Acest tip de decor (grifon) a fost folosit pentru a decora bijuterii, obiecte de lux, sigilii, textile, reliefuri etc. Mărfurile transportate de grupul lidian, așa cum sunt reprezentate pe scara de est, și unele dintre prototipurile sale metalice au fost folosite de clasa bogată a societății iraniene în perioada ahenenidă.

KEYWORDS: Eastern staircase, Lydia group, Amphora, armlet, Griffin, Ceremonies.

CUVINTE CHEIE: Scara de Est, grupul din Lydia, amforă, brățări de brațe, grifon, ceremonii.

¹ This article is an excerpt from Vahid Azadi's PhD thesis entitled A Look at Apadana Palace in Persepolis, Case Study: Columns and Stairs.

Introduction

Fars province, located in the southwestern part of Iran, is considered to be an important cradle of the history and culture of Iranian art, which after passing through different periods and new inventions gradually turned to urbanisation and the creation of great civilizations in the historical era². During the time of Darius I, the Achaemenid government experienced the construction of many buildings. At first, he built Susa, but had a bigger project in mind. This time, in his hometown in Parse city, he found the slope of Mount Rahmat in Marvdasht province of Fars suitable. He, then, hired artists, craftsmen and architects from other countries under the empire to build and decorate it. Persepolis had many buildings, such as Apadana Palace, Tachara, Hadish Palace, North and Eastern staircases, Hundredth Palace, Central Palace, Treasury Palace etc³. Apadana Palace is one of the buildings of Persepolis which was discovered during the archaeological excavations made during the first Pahlavi period. This palace has two sets of stairs, and the eastern staircase is better preserved than the north one. On the body of this staircase, many motifs were carved in relief, including vegetal, animal, human, geometric, etc. The number of business delegations, carved horizontally on the body of the eastern staircase, is 23. They were honoured to be in the presence of the Achaemenid Shah to greet Nowruz and New Year⁴. Each delegation was led by a Persian or Mede officer by holding the hand of the first member of the delegation to the status section. One of these groups is Lydia's business delegation⁵. The people of this delegation were part of the people of the western lands subjected to the Achaemenid Empire (Fig. 1). The number of the members of this delegation who came to greet the New Year was six. In addition to the chariot and horses, they brought with them a pair of amphorae, a pair of bowls and a pair of arm rings. The amphorae's handles and the terminal parts of the arm rings were clearly represented in the shape of griffins. The griffin is one of the mythical beasts of the ancient period. They first appeared on seals of the Sumerian, Akkadian and Assyrian civilizations in Mesopotamia, then through cultural and social connections, they entered the art of Elam and Media, and afterwards the art of the Achaemenids. The artists of this period used the griffin image for decorations in the fields of art and architecture.

In this article, an attempt has been made to investigate the goods carried by the Lydia delegate on the body of the eastern staircase of Apadana from an archaeological point of view and present the result of the investigation.

Research background

Before discussing the goods brought by the Lydian delegation as represented in the reliefs of the eastern staircase of Apadana, it must be said that some scholars⁶ believe that the mentioned business delegation were representatives of Lydia subordinated to the Achaemenid Empire and brought a number of goods with themselves. The mentioned scientists have made brief references to the brought goods in their books.

Research questions

In regards to the Lydian delegation carved on the body of the eastern staircase of Apadana, in which delegate's hands can the amphora with animal decorations be seen?

In what regards the Lydian delegation carved on the body of the eastern staircase of Apadana, in the hands of which delegate can bowls and rings be seen?

Research materials and methodology

The main research method is descriptive-analytical, the research being conducted in two stages. First, there were library studies that include the identification of sources related to the current research. In the next stage, the data and information obtained were analysed and the research materials were determined through library and text studies, field research, museum research and also using the websites of important and famous museums in the world, in which some types of metal amphorae, bowls and rings are kept. In the field study, the focus was on the relief of the eastern staircase of Apadana in Persepolis, and especially the image of the Lydian delegation present

² Rafii 2002, 119.

³ Koch 2006, 49.

⁴ Rajabi 2003, 132.

⁵ Lydia state was located in the west of the Achaemenid Empire, in the current country of Turkey; after this land was captured by Cyrus the Great, was considered part of the Achaemenid territory.

⁶ Schmidt 2002, 143; Koch 2006, 87; Roaf 2001, 67; Walser 2009, 170; Brent George 2005, 96; Sami 2004, 181; Shapour Shahbazi 2007, 73; Curtis 2010, 103; Akbar Sarfaraz and Firouzmandi 2009, 93.

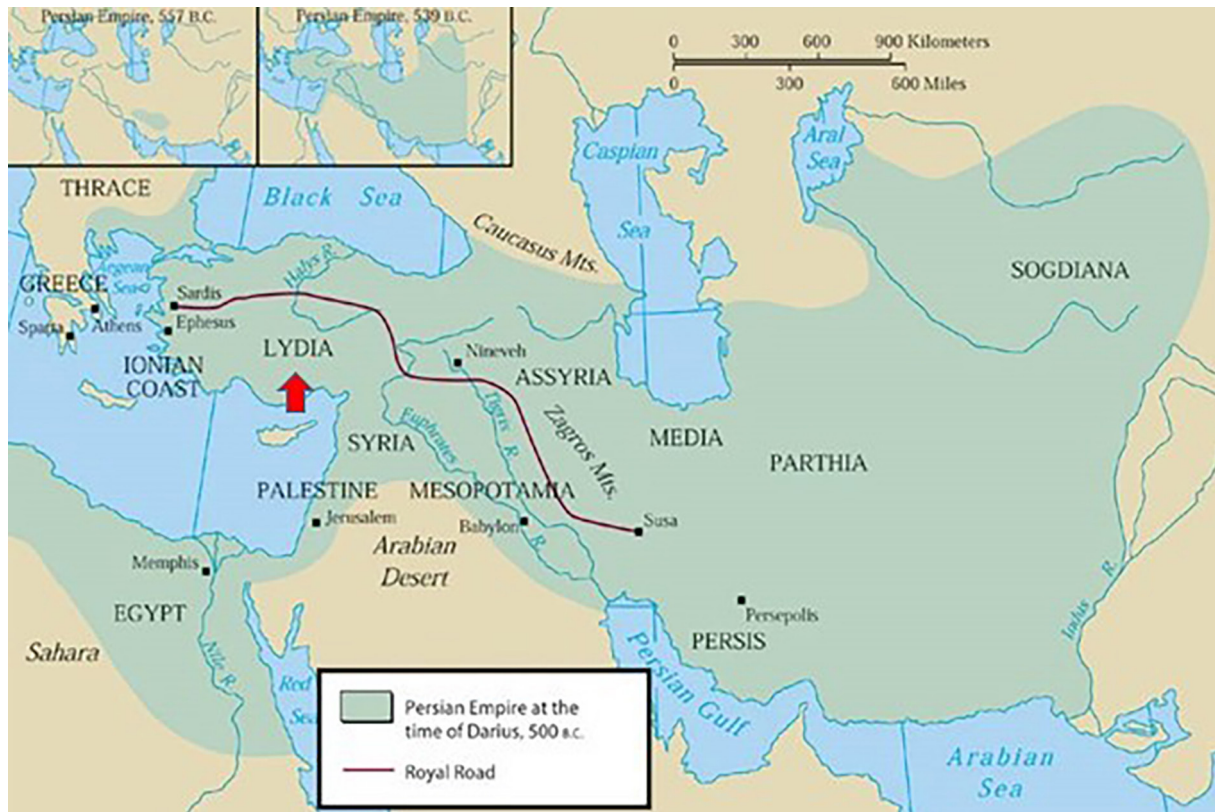


Fig. 1. Map of the Achaemenid Empire and the geographical location of the Lydia Government (Azadi, 2015, 21).

on it, which shows six Lydian carrying two amphorae, two bowls, and two rings. They also brought two horses and a chariot with them. In total on the eastern staircase, there are carved 10 rings, 3 amphorae, and 20 bowls, of which the Lydian delegates carry 2 rings, 2 amphorae, 2 bowls; the Sogdian delegates carry 2 rings; the Scythians 2 rings; the Armenians 1 amphora; the Ionians 4 bowls; the Babylonians 4 bowls; the Balkhi 4 bowls; the Zarangi Rokhji delegates 2 bowls; the Syrians 4 bowls. These samples represented the study materials of the research. In addition, we included the amphora in Reza Abbasi Museum of Tehran and the bowl in the Glassware Museum of Tehran.

The Achaemenid kings did their best to build and decorate their buildings in Persepolis. For this reason, in choosing the type of materials, they hired great artists and craftsmen from other lands, for example, Lebanon was used for carpenters and the Ilami village of Abiradosh was used for stonemasons.⁷ The eastern staircase of Apadana, which



Fig. 2. Figures of the Lydian delegation in the eastern staircase of the Apadana of Persepolis (by the authors).

⁷ Roaf 2001, 64.

is a unique masterpiece of its own kind, used the cypress tree motif, which in Achaemenid art was a symbol of happiness, abundance and greenery, to spatially separate the business delegations.⁸ In Figure 2, we can see the Lydian delegates carrying three separate and different types of goods. The first item of this delegation is a pair of amphorae, which we will examine in the following discussion.

Amphorae of the Lydian delegates

These amphorae have a turnip-shaped type of body. These amphorae were decorated on the body with vertical lines. Achaemenid artists used these lines to decorate important and valuable objects and had a special interest in them⁹. The handles of these amphorae were shaped like the legendary griffin animals, with their head back as if they were guarding the container and its contents. One of the handles included also a tube (Fig. 3). Achaemenid artists used motifs of real animals in the form of lions, cows and deer, or in the form of mythological beasts like the griffins for the decoration of valuable metal vessels.

Griffin roots

This motif has always attracted the attention of artists during past eras and in various dynasties. The image of this animal has been seen in relief on seals, plaques and monuments. The appearance of this mythical animal includes a lion's body paired with an eagle's wings. According to the evidence in museums and written sources, this motif (griffin) was first seen in a simple form on Sumerian seals and then in the Akkadian and Assyrian periods in Mesopotamia.¹⁰ After that, it entered other neighbouring lands, including the Iranian plateau through cultural and social connections, and evidence of the griffin's motif was seen on the bronzes of Lorestan. The griffin motif was found in the first millennium BC among the works discovered in the Marlik cemeteries in the north of Iran¹¹ and also in the New Ilam period in the Arjan treasure in Behbahan, as well as in the Median period and in the Ziwiye hoard of Kurdistan. The motif of the griffin changed quantitatively and qualitatively when it entered Achaemenid art, and the artists of this period used this motif to decorate things such as glazed walls, entrances and exits of portals, dishes, capitals, ornaments, seals, cloth, war tools, etc. After the Achaemenid and the Parthian period, artists used griffins as symbols in the decorations of Nisian rhytons. The difference observed in the use of griffin decorations in the Achaemenid period in comparison to others indicates that in the Achaemenid period, in addition to the fact that this motif was used on many elements, it was also sometimes seen individually or in pairs. Sometimes, the griffin played different roles in Achaemenid art. For example, sometimes it appeared in the role of the enemy of the king (Fig. 4) and sometimes it in an angry form, an example of which can be seen in



Fig. 3. Amphorae of the Lydia delegate with griffin decorations (by the authors).

⁸ Tavakli 2008, 94-97.

⁹ Moor and Abdi 2000, 41

¹⁰ McCall 1995, 58.

¹¹ Negahban 1992, 53.

the golden rhyton in the Museum of Ancient Iran. Sometimes, it is depicted in the form of a guardian and protector, an example of which is the griffin capital in the palaces of Persepolis, as if it was in charge of guarding the palace and other buildings. In short, the Achaemenid artists used the griffin motif with different goals and purposes in the art and architecture of this period, although this art was a court art, and the artist did not have freedom of action and received all orders from the noble class and especially the king himself.



Fig. 4. The king is fighting with a griffin in Persepolis (by the authors).

The use of amphorae by the Lydian delegates

Various opinions have been given about the use of amphorae by the Lydian delegates as carved in the eastern staircase of the Apadana of Persepolis. For example, Margaret Miller believes that the vessels with a part of the body or the handle in the shape of a mythical beast were used in ceremonies¹², while Roman Ghirshman believes

¹² Miller 1993, 123.

that metal amphorae, either golden or silver, especially those with animal-shaped handles, were buried with their owners and have had some ritual use¹³. In his book *“Darius and the Iranians”*, Walther Hinz has expressed an opinion similar to Ghirshman recognizing the ritual use of this type of vessel, the contents of which were believed to be sacrificial wine¹⁴. John Curtis, in his book *“Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia”* has identified a ceremonial and official use for amphorae. Since the amphorae of the Lydia delegate were brought to the body of the eastern staircase of Apadana on the day of Nowruz greetings, they had more official and ceremonial use than ritual use.

The material and typology of the amphorae of Lydia delegate

Achaemenid artists used gold and silver sheets to make valuable metal containers by casting, hammering and carving. Various theories have been put forward about the type of amphorae of the Lydia delegates in the Eastern Staircase, and all scientists have accepted that the type of these amphorae was made of precious metal because these dishes are offered in a special ceremony such as Nowruz. But there is a difference of opinion in the type of material used in them. Heidemarie Koch¹⁵ and Farrukh Malekzadeh¹⁶ both believe that the amphorae of Lydia delegate are made of gold and silver.

A golden example of an amphora is kept in the Reza Abbasi Museum in Tehran (Fig. 5). The body of this vessel has a turnip-shaped body like the amphorae of the Lydia delegation in the eastern staircase. Patterns were used in the form of horizontal lines on the edges, while vertical and vegetal motifs were used on the body of the container. Casting, hammering and carving methods were applied in the creation of this vessel¹⁷. This vessel is similar to the amphorae of the Lydian delegation in the eastern staircase, and it is of open form in terms of the divisions of the form of the containers. John Curtis¹⁸ and Philip Brent George¹⁹ have both mentioned the type of amphora carried by the Lydian delegates in the eastern staircase as made in silver. An example of an Achaemenid silver amphora discovered in the Duvanli region of Bulgaria is kept in the Sofia Museum of Bulgaria (Fig. 6). The decoration of Duvanli amphora, especially its handles, is very similar to the image of the amphora of the Lydian delegates in the eastern staircase (Fig. 7), which was used in official and ceremonial ceremonies. The handles of this amphora are in the shape of angry griffins whose heads turn back as if they were the guardians of the container and its contents. The body of the Duvali amphora is decorated with vegetal motifs, especially lotus flowers, as well as geometric decorations in the form of vertical lines. Achaemenid artists decorated metal and valuable vessels with flowers or lotus petals to beautify them²⁰.

An interesting point about Achaemenid metal vessels is that their bodies are either simple or have vertical or horizontal grooves. Friezes of Ipomoea or palm flowers were used to decorate this type of vessels²¹. An



Fig. 5. Golden amphora of Reza Abasi Museum in Tehran (by the authors).

¹³ Ghirshman 2011, 260.

¹⁴ Hinz 2000, 130.

¹⁵ Koch 2006, 142.

¹⁶ Malekzadeh 1990, 6.

¹⁷ Sami 2010, 73.

¹⁸ Curtis 2010, 103.

¹⁹ Brent George 2005, 159.

²⁰ Ghirshman 2011, 256.

²¹ Salahshur et al. 2017, 77



Fig. 6. Duvanli amphora of Sofia Museum, Bulgaria
(after Gergova 2010, 70).

interesting and important point is that the decorations and motifs used in the amphora of the Lydian delegate are similar to the amphora of the Armenian delegate in the eastern staircase of the Apadana of Persepolis (Fig. 8). It indicates the fact that each group of vessels was not regional but belonged to a specific type that was accepted by the Achaemenid court and was probably produced in workshops located in Asia Minor²². In his book “*Mad and Achaemenid*”, Ghirshman believed that Achaemenid artists imitated nature by decorating metal vessels with plants, but this is despite the fact that in the north and south of the royal palace in Kartukulti Ninor, traces of wall paintings have been found and these paintings were horizontal²³. The Kartukulti palace of Ninor is one of the works of the Assyrian period in Mesopotamia, in which plant motifs in the form of Ipomoea or palm flowers were used in the decoration of walls. These decorations are very similar to the plant motifs of the Duvanlia. Achaemenid artists used the style and art of neighbouring countries, especially Assyrian art, in their art through cultural and social connections.

A silver amphora, dating from the 5th -6th centuries BC, is kept in the private collection of Basel in Switzerland. It is similar to the image of the amphora of the Lydia delegate in the eastern staircase and can be compared and matched with it. To make this amphora, the casting method with hammering and riveting was used. The handles of both the amphora of the Lydian delegate in the eastern staircase and the silver amphora of the private collection of Basel in Switzerland (Fig. 9) have animal motifs. They also have turnip-shaped body decorations marking the place on the body where the animal's hands and feet are attached to the edge of the container.²⁴

In a private Parisian collection, there is another silver amphora this time inlaid with gold, which is also similar in shape and function to the amphora of the Lydian delegate in the eastern staircase, but the obvious difference is in the decoration of its handles in which real animals such as deer had been used instead of griffin motifs (Fig. 10). In this work, the deer's feet were attached to the edge and body of the amphora, while the deer's head was facing down. On the body of this vessel, the motif of gold Ipomoea was riveted by hammering, while geometric motifs were used to decorate in the form of vertical lines. In summary, it can be said about the amphora in the private collection of Paris that this work was made with the casting method along with hammering and riveting, and this

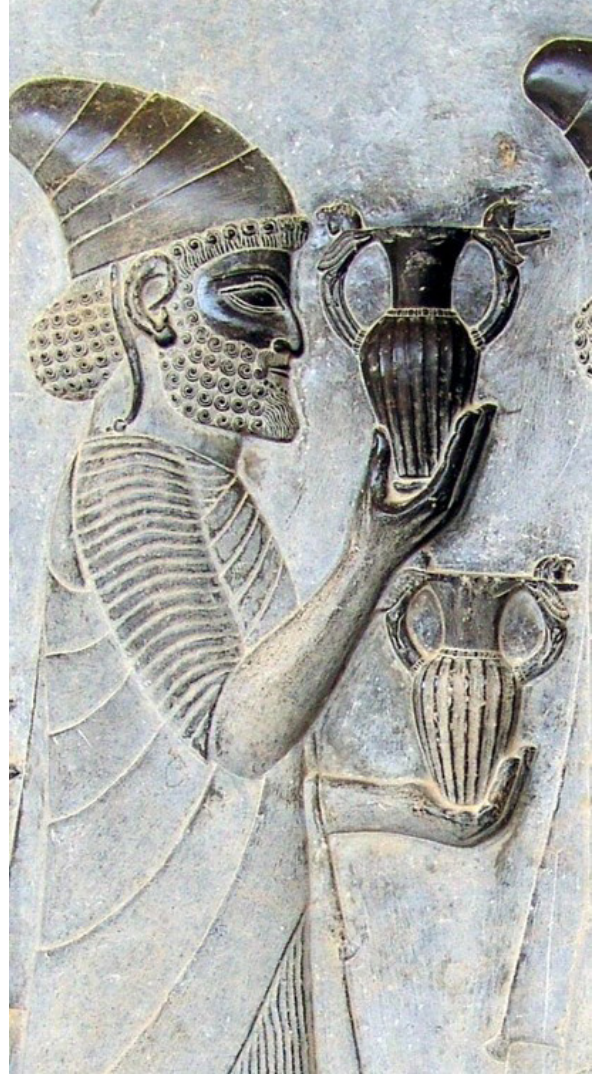


Fig. 7. The image of the amphorae carried by the Lydian delegate in the eastern staircase of Apadana
(by the authors).

²² Filow 1934, 202.

²³ Majidzadeh 2000, 167.

²⁴ Dashti 2012, 93.



Fig. 8. The image of the amphora carried by an Armenian delegate on the eastern staircase of Apadana (by the authors).



Fig. 9. Amphora of a Swiss private collection (after Dashti 2012, 96).



Fig. 10. Amphora of the private collection in Paris (Hintz 2000, 147).



Fig. 11. Philippovka amphora of the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, Russia (Salahshur et al. 2017, 77).

vessel was used in official ceremonies and sometimes in court parties. This amphora is pen form type in terms of the divisions of the shape of the containers in terms of a shape similar to the amphora of the Lydian delegate in the eastern staircase of Apadana, and regarding decoration, it matches the amphora of Sofia Museum in Bulgaria.

In terms of typology, in addition to the mentioned items, another silver amphora was found in the Philippovka ancient site in Russia, which dates back to a period between the middle of the 5th century and the beginning of the 4th century BC. Although this work lacks plant decorations in the form of lotus flowers and palm leaves, it has geometric decorations in the form of vertical lines (Fig. 11) and it seems that it had been produced in the workshops of Asia Minor²⁵. Achaemenid artists used a lot of geometric motifs (vertical lines) in the decoration of valuable metal vessels. The amphora found at Philippovka²⁶ site has such decorations. This work has a handle that performs both the work of the handle and that of a tube. In the handle part of this work, the motif of a deer with its head turned back was used²⁷. This work was used in ceremonial and court contexts. It is similar to the image of the Lydian amphorae in the eastern staircase.

Bowls of the Lydian delegates

In addition to the amphorae, the Lydian delegation on the eastern staircase of the Apadana of Persepolis brought with them on the day of Salam Nowruz a pair of bowls. The vessels were carried by one person, walking behind the amphora carrier. The use of



Fig. 13. The carriers of the bowls of the Ionian delegation in the eastern staircase of Apadana (by the authors).



Fig. 12. The carrier of the bowl of the Lydian delegation in the eastern staircase of Apadana (after Rezaian 2005, 35).

bowls by the Lydian delegates in the eastern staircase was to contain water, wine and other

liquids and they had official and ceremonial functions. In terms of the division of the shape of the containers, the bowls of this group are related to the open form, and in terms of the division of the appearance, they are related to the sedge bowls, and their bodies are without decoration (Fig. 12). In addition to the Lydian delegate, bowls may be also observed in the hands of Ionian, Syrian, Babylonian, Balkhi and Zarangi Rokhji trading boards, but the bowls of the Lydians delegation in the eastern staircase are more similar to the bowls carried by the Ionian delegation' (Fig. 13). In addition to the eastern staircase of Apadana in Persepolis, in some other monuments of Persepolis, such as the wall of the Tachara Palace, Hadish Palace, the Central Palace and the northern staircase of the Apadana Palace, images of servants and bowl-carrying delegations are present. The servants carrying flat-edged bowls were carved on the walls of the mentioned palaces (Fig. 14). In the northern staircase of Apadana, the shape of the bowls is partially unknown due to the destruction that took place here²⁸, but in general, the

²⁵ Treister 2010, 237-238.

²⁶ Philippovka: It is the name of one of the ancient sites in the south of Russia, and artifacts from the Achaemenid period have been discovered in it.

²⁷ Yablonsky 2010, 139.

²⁸ Culican 2006, 143.

bowls carried by the Lydian delegate on the eastern staircase of Apadana are part of the of s-edge type bowls and they are completely different from the bowls of servants in Tachara Palace, Hadish Palace and Central Palace in terms of appearance.

Material and typology of the Lydian delegation bowls

Since the Lydian delegate carried a pair of bowls on the eastern staircase of Apadana to offer congratulations, there is a strong possibility that these bowls were made of precious metal. Also, John Curtis in the book *"The Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia"*²⁹ mentioned the material of the bowls of the Lydian group in the eastern staircase of the Apadana of Persepolis as metal and glass, a metal prototype of which being kept in the Miho Museum in Japan. Its material is gold (Fig. 15) and its body is smooth and has no pattern or decoration. A casting method was used to make it. It is similar to the bowls of the Lydian delegate in the eastern staircase of Apadana. In the Brooklyn Museum in the United States, there are many artifacts from the civilization of Asian countries, including Iran, one of which is a silver bowl (Fig. 16) that belongs to the Achaemenid period. It has plant decorations and a casting method was used to make it. It is similar to the bowls carried by the Lydian delegate in the eastern staircase of Apadana.

An example of a glass bowl is kept in The Glassware Museum of Tehran. This bowl has a lotus flower pattern on its bottom. Achaemenid artists used plant motifs in the decoration of vessels. Also, there is a ridge at the bottom



Fig. 14. The carrier of the bowl in Tachara Palace (by the authors).



Fig. 15. The bowl of Miho Museum of Japan (Dashti 2012, 98).

²⁹ Curtis 2010, 104.



Fig. 16. The bowl of the Brooklyn Museum of America (Sami, 2009, 81).



Fig. 17. The bowl of Glassware Museum, Tehran (by the authors).

of this bowl that makes it easy to hold this bowl in the hand and the contents inside the bowl do not spill out (Fig. 17). In addition to the glass bowl of the Abgineh Museum, another glass bowl is kept in the Metropolitan Museum of New York. This work, like the bowl of The Glassware Museum, has plant decorations in the shape of a lotus flower at the end, and is similar to the image of the bowls of the Lydia delegate in the eastern staircase of Apadana.

The armlets of the Lydian delegation

Arm rings, like amphorae and bowls, have played an important role in the history of different eras of mankind under different titles. At first, the armlet was made in a very simple way with the aim of meeting human needs at that time, and metals such as copper or bronze were used in a very basic way. Later, in the middle of the third and second millennium BC, decorations were added to these rings in the form of animal heads. Until, in the

historical period, especially during the Achaemenid Empire period, practical and serious measures were taken by the artists in terms of quantity and quality. Examples of such pieces can be seen in the reliefs of Persepolis. In addition to amphorae and bowls, the Lydian delegates brought a pair of armlets that were carried by one of the members of the delegation depicted on the eastern staircase of Apadana. At the ends of these rings, decorations were used in the form of griffins (Fig. 18). This type of mythological animal is similar to the griffins depicted on the amphora of the Armenian delegation of the eastern staircase of Apadana. Achaemenid artists used various decorations such as plant, animal and geometric motifs in various forms and spectrums to decorate metal objects. Since these rings were brought by the Lydia delegate for New Year's greetings, they had a ceremonial and courtly function and were specific to the wealthy sections of the society. It should be noted that the armlet was seen in the hands of a Lydian delegate, in the hands of the Medes (Fig. 19) and the Scythians (Fig. 20) carved on the eastern staircase of Apadana. The decorations of the rings carried by these delegates are somewhat unclear due to destruction. The image of griffins had been used to decorate the rings carried by the Lydian delegate. The origin of this type of animal and the course of its use in Achaemenid art was mentioned in the previous pages.



Fig. 18. The carrier of the Lydian delegation is depicted on the eastern staircase of Apadana (by the authors).



Fig. 19. The carrier of the Medes delegation depicted on the eastern staircase of Apadana (by the authors).



Fig. 20. The carrier of the Scythian delegation depicted on the eastern staircase of Apadana (after Shapour Shahbazi 2007, 131).

Material and typology of Lydian delegation's armlets

Most of the scholars and those who have published works on the reliefs of Persepolis agree that the armlets brought by the Lydian delegation as offerings to the king on New Year's greetings were made of precious metal. In the Achaemenid period, the precious and valuable metals were gold and silver; an example of such a gold armlet is kept in the British Museum (Fig. 21). In terms of motif, the fashion of decoration and elegance used in its construction is very similar to the items carried by the Lydian delegate in the eastern staircase of Apadana. The British Museum armlet was discovered in the treasure of Jihun. Some parts of this ring are empty, but it is most likely that these empty spaces were originally filled with precious stones. The mentioned treasure was found in non-scientific exploration beside the Jihun or Amu Darya River in the present territory of Tajikistan, most likely on the ancient hill of Tal Qabad, which is a passage on the north bank of the river, between 1877 and 1880 AD.³⁰

Conclusion

The amphorae and arm rings that were brought by the Lydian delegation as depicted on the eastern staircase of Apadana as gifts on the occasion of congratulating the king. These items were decorated with animal figures in the form of a griffin. Achaemenid artists incorporated this motif (griffin) through cultural and social connections from the art of neighbouring countries. Amphorae, bowls and arm rings have been used in ceremonies and court parties. In the reliefs of the eastern staircase, their ceremonial use is obvious. In addition to the decorations of vessels and rings, griffin motifs were used to beautify the entrance doors of buildings, reliefs, ornaments, seals, capitals, etc in Achaemenid art. In the Achaemenid period, this motif (griffin), which is a symbol of vigilance and resistance, was used in amphorae and arm rings, where it had its head back as a symbol of its role as guardian. The bowls of the Lydian delegation are an open vessel shape. These types of vessels, as well as the armlets were specific to the wealthy classes of the society of that time. The griffin decorations used in the amphorae and arm rings of the Lydian delegation are similar to the decorations of the Armenian delegation amphora. It seems that a specific and conservative model was employed when making the metal amphorae of the Lydian delegation, whether they were golden or silver. In most of them, animal motifs (mythical or real), plant motifs (Ipomoea flower, rosette flower and palm flower) and geometric motifs (horizontal and vertical lines) were used. Some of them were produced in the workshops of the western plateau of the Achaemenid Empire, especially the Anatolian plateau and Asia Minor. In terms of typology, some of the metal amphorae, bowls and rings of the Achaemenid period, which are comparable to the reliefs of vessels and arm rings of the Lydian delegation in the eastern staircase of Apadana, have animal, plant and geometric decorations. They are now adorning some of the most important museums in the world and many tourists are attracted to see them every year.

³⁰ Curtis 2008, 102.



Fig. 21. Gold armlet in British Museum(Brent George, 2005, 166).

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