Parviz Tanavoli
and the Lions of Iran
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Lions in Ancient Iran
John Curtis

Lions existed in Iran until almost the middle of the 20th century, but they are now extinct.¹ The Persian lion was related to the Asian lion of India, and was a subspecies known as *panthera leo persica*. It is thought to have had a black mane. According to Firouz, the Asian lion differs from the African lion in two important respects: “adult males have a distinct ‘belly fold’ and the mane does not extend on the forehead”.²

In modern times lions were restricted to the south-west of Iran, to the provinces of Khuzestan and Fars. Favourite habitats were the reed-beds by the rivers of Khuzestan, the forested lower slopes of the Zagros Mountains, and the Arzhan plain (Dasht-e Arzhan) between Shiraz and Kazerun. They preyed mainly on wild boar, deer and gazelles. The last lions in Iran were apparently seen in the 1940s.³

William Kennett Loftus, who excavated at Susa between 1850 and 1852, records⁴ that the old bed of the River Karkheh in the vicinity of Susa “is now a thick forest of tamarisk, poplar, and acacia, and is said to be a celebrated cover for lions; in fact, I several times observed their traces there, and the people of the country shun the neighbourhood”. The archaeologist and traveller Austen Henry Layard, who travelled extensively in Western Iran in the 1840s before going on to excavate at the Assyrian cities of Nimrud and Nineveh in Mesopotamia, records⁵ that “they [lions] abound in Khuzestan, the ancient Susiana: I have frequently seen three or four together, and have hunted them with the chiefs of the tribes inhabiting that province”. Elsewhere, he says they were common in the district of Ram Hormuz and on the banks of the River Karun, and he describes lion hunts with the Bakhtiar tribe; he describes how the killing of a lion was greatly admired amongst the Bakhtiaris, and how statues of lions are found on tombs in Bakhtiar cemeteries.⁶ In ancient times lions must have been equally plentiful in Khuzestan, as testified by the fact that the stone carvings on the Apadana Palace at Persepolis show lion cubs being brought as presents for the great king by a delegation from Elam.

Both Layard and Loftus also travelled and excavated in Mesopotamia (Iraq) to the west of Iran, and both referred to the presence there of lions. Loftus describes how while camping at the ancient city of Larsa he was much troubled by lions that lived in the dense undergrowth and reeds along the banks of an ancient canal and devoured all the dogs that accompanied his party.⁷ Layard records that lions were occasionally

¹. Humphreys and Kahrom 1995: 77-84; Firouz 2005: 65
². According to Humphreys and Kahrom (1995: 77), “the last lions were recorded in the early 1940s, single specimens being seen by Heaney (1943) and Champion-Jones (1945) who saw a lioness in the Karkh river gorge in 1941” (both references are to ‘Occurrence of the lion in Persia’, Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society, vol 44). According to Firouz (2005: 65), “the last lion in Iran was seen by an Indian surveyor of the British army in 1942, in an area 65 km (40 miles) northwest of the city of Dezful”.
³. Loftus 1857: 346
⁴. Layard 1849: II, p. 48
⁵. Layard 1887: i, 438-446; see now Khosronejad 2016
found as far north as ancient Ashur on the River Tigris but were more common on the banks of the river below Baghdad.7 The last lion in Iraq was apparently killed in 1896.8 In South-West Iran, lions were still often seen by European travellers in the second half of the 19th century. Thus, the scientist W.T. Blandford was attacked by a lion in Ahwaz in 1867; Blandford escaped up a tree, but his horse was wounded.9 The feisty traveller Jane Dieulafoy, who explored the Middle East with her archaeologist husband Marcel Dieulafoy in 1880-1881, records seeing a magnificent lion on the banks of the River Karun between Ahvaz and Mohammerah (Khorramshahr).10 However, by 1900 they had been almost hunted to extinction. Although isolated sightings continued until the 1940s, they were sufficiently rare by 1903 for Crawshay-Williams to believe they were extinct even in the Arzan region.11

As we have said, in modern times lions were restricted to Khuzestan and Fars, but it is uncertain whether their distribution in ancient times was similarly restricted or whether it was more widespread. However that may be, lions are depicted in various different cultures in most parts of ancient Iran. It is obvious that lions have had a fascination for man in every age. This must be because in every way the lion was the king of the beasts, strong and powerful albeit dangerous. The lion therefore deserved great respect, and if a man could be credited with killing a lion it would greatly enhance his reputation and standing. It is for this reason that many of the artistic representations of lions in Iran and elsewhere in the ancient world show them being hunted or killed in single combat. Underlining the belief in the strength of the lion is the fact that when powerful composite monsters were created for artistic purposes they were usually in part lionine, often combined with the wings and talons of an eagle, the most powerful bird in the skies. We see such creatures in combat with the Persian royal hero, for example at Persepolis.12

Amongst the early representations of lions in Iranian art, those on objects associated with the so-called Jiroft civilization are particularly numerous. Characteristic of this civilization are objects, mostly vessels, carved from a soft greyish-green stone called chlorite. These vessels have been found in large numbers in looted cemeteries in the area of the modern town of Jiroft, 230 km south of Kerman in Eastern Iran. Unfortunately practically all this material has been recovered in illicit excavations, and so our knowledge about the Jiroft civilization is limited, but it is clear that it was at the centre of a vast trading network stretching around the middle of the 3rd millennium BC from Sumer in Southern Iraq and Elam in South-Western Iran to Afghanistan in the east. The influence of neighbouring civilizations, and the shared cultural values, is evident in the representations of lions, which presumably did not exist in the arid semi-desert conditions of Kerman province. However that may be, lions are show for example on chlorite vases from Jiroft,13 straight-sided bowls14 (PL1/p.169) and handbag-shaped objects that have sometimes been identified as weights15 (PL2/p.170). There are also small figurines in the round in the shape of lions,16 also in chlorite, and lapis lazuli stamp seals featuring lions.17 Sometimes the lions are shown in the unlikely setting of palm groves. These vessels have been found in large numbers in looted cemeteries in this area many thousands of bronze and iron lion pins18 (PL6/p.175), and a glazed pottery wall-plaque with embossed lion's head19 (PL7/p.176). The lapis lazuli lion bowl from Hasanlu may be compared with an unprovenanced example in stone (PL8/p.175).

Another site to have produced monochrome bronzed pottery is Marlik in Gilan, in the lush mountainous area between the Elburz Mountains and the Caspian Sea. Here, in 1961-2, Professor Estart O. Negahban excavated about 50 tombs dating from the late 14th or early 13th centuries BC. Around the middle of the 2nd millennium BC, tribes speaking Indo-Iranian languages (the ancestors of the people later known as the Medes and the Persians) are thought to have begun to migrate onto the Iranian plateau from areas further north. Their progress onto the plateau is charted at sites such as Hasankil in Azerbaidzhan, where the new arrivals are attested in period V (c. 1450-1250 BC) by the appearance of grey and red burnished pottery and extramural burials rather than within houses as previously. In the next period (Hasanlu IV) there were a series of columned buildings arranged around courtyards that were destroyed by a fierce fire in around 800 BC. Thousands of artefacts were recovered from the destruction debris, including a lion bowl made of lapis lazuli with gold overlay20 (PL7/p.174), a bronze and iron lion pin21 (PL9/p.176), and a glazed pottery wall-plaque with embossed lion's head (PL10/p.177). The lapis lazuli lion bowl from Hasanlu may be compared with an unprovenanced example in stone (PL8/p.175).

artefacts have been found, comprising elaborate horse harness elements; master-of-animals standards or finials; axes and other weapons; and decorative pins. A large bronze disc with a human face in high relief in the centre surrounded by lions is also in the Luristan style (PL.13/p.180). It is possibly a shield- boss. There is much that is still unknown about the Luristan culture, but the graves are thought to be mainly those of warrior-nomads. Probably related to some of the extraordinary metalwork found in Luristan is a highly fanciful axe-head, presumably ceremonial, with an openwork blade featuring a pair of lions each attacking its prey (PL.14/p.181). It supposedly comes from Anarui in Gilan and probably dates to the early 1st millennium BC. More typical of the usual Luristan bronzes are socketed bronze axe-heads with lions mounted on the back of the socket in the Tanavoli Collection (PL.17/p.183, PL.15/p.182) and a bronze mace-head also with a lion on the back of the socket (PL.16/p.183), also in the Tanavoli Collection.

One of the most intriguing Iron Age sites in Western Iran is Ziwiyeh in Kurdistan, situated at the top of a rocky hill in mountainous country 45 km south-east of Saqqez. It is some notorious for the chance discovery there in around 1947 of a bronze coffin and a bronze mace-head, each with a lion on the back of the socket (PL.16/p.183), again in the Tanavoli Collection.

We have referred above to Elam in the context of trade and civilization in the 3rd millennium BC. It existed to emerge as a state until the beginning of the Achaemenid period, with its own (non-Iranian) language written in the cuneiform script. A high point in the fortunes of Elam came in the latter part of the 2nd millennium BC, when it enjoyed a period of great prosperity. In the 1st millennium BC it became a rival to Assyria, and in 646 BC the capital city of Susa was brutally sacked by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal. It used to be thought that Elamite civilization was then snuffed out, but recent discoveries have shown that this was not the case. In 3982, a rich tomb was discovered by chance at Arjan near Behbahān in Khuzestan, about 250 km south-east of Susa. The body was buried in a bronze coffin similar to the Ziwiyeh example, accompanied by a range of exceptionally interesting objects. Amongst them was a gold bracelet with incised decoration of winged lions on the terminals (PL.24/p.189), a gold fitting in the form of the foreparts of a lion (PL.20/p.187), and parts of three ivory figurines in the form of lions (PL.21, 22, 23/p.188).

We should start our survey with Persepolis (Takht-e Jamshid), a major Achaemenid centre and one of the best-preserved and most impressive sites in the whole of the ancient world. Here, some of the column capitals in the Apadana Palace are in the Assyrian type with high sides and with incised decoration around the flat rim showing Assyrian officials receiving tribute from local tribesmen. The coffin allegedly contained a large amount of gold and silver treasure, but as it was not scientifically excavated we cannot be sure what was really found here. Subsequent excavations at Ziwiyeh show that it was a fortress site with a columned hall that was occupied mainly in the Iron III period, 8th-7th century BC. The site was within the territory of the ancient kingdom of Mannea, and the artefacts found here demonstrate Assyrian, Scythian and local influence. Objects allegedly from Ziwiyeh showing lions and in the National Museum of Iran include a gold sheet divided into panels each showing a man-lion combat scene (PL.18/p.184), a silver horse frontlet with a rearing lion (PL.19/p.185), a gold fitting in the form of the foreparts of a lion (PL.20/p.187), and parts of three ivory figurines in the form of lions (PL.21, 22, 23/p.188).

The friezes on the north and east sides of the Apadana or Palace of Xerxes are mirror images of each other and show files of Persian and Median nobles and 23 delegations from all around the empire bringing presents to the great king. Originally (from the reign of Xerxes) there were panels showing the king sitting on a throne in the centre of each façade, 23 panelled by panels showing a lion attacking a bull. The lion has its front claws on the back of the bull, which has lifted the front of its body off the ground and is turning its head to look at the lion. Lion and bull combat scenes can also be found on the western facade of the west staircase of the Palace of Darius (tachara) at Persepolis where they are framed by a central panel of inscription of Artaxerxes III (339-338 BC) and scenes of tributaries. There has been much discussion over the years about the significance of these lion and bull combat scenes, and there is still no general agreement about their meaning. Opinions have included the victory of Ahuramazda over Ahriman, representations of the constellations Leo and Taurus, and the passage between night and day. The late A. D. H. Bivar argued strongly that Mithraic symbolism should be seen in the motif, but while this seems highly likely it has not yet been proven.

Amongst the 23 delegations shown on the two sides of the Apadana, that from Elam (no. 2) is of particular interest for us as it shows the delegates bringing a lioness and two lion cubs. As each of the delegations bring presents that are typical of their region, this is a clear indication that lions were well-known in Elam, and probably at Susa itself.
Lions are also found in the decorative schemes at other major Persian centres. For example, stone column capitals in the form of lions are also known at Pasargadae,46 and lions are shown in some of the glazed brick panels from Susa.47 The Palace of Darius at Susa really consists of two parts, a Persian-style ‘apadana’, or hall with columns, and a vast adjoining mud brick building with rooms arranged around courtyards in the Babylonian style. The courtyards were decorated with friezes of glazed bricks showing, in addition to lions, griffins, guards (the ‘immortals’) and a pair of winged human headed lions beneath a winged disc.

As in earlier and later periods, the hunting of lions was a popular royal sport in the Achaemenid period, and the most famous seal to have survived from this time, found in Egypt and now in the British Museum, shows Darius riding in a chariot hunting lions.48 An accompanying inscription in three languages records “Darius the great king. There are a number of other seals showing a figure hunting lions,49 and given that the figure shown is usually a king we may assume that hunting lions was probably the prerogative of the king and his family. This fondness for hunting lions is not mentioned in Persian inscriptions but it is corroborated by the Greek authors. Thus, Ctesias has a story, probably fictional, relating to Artaxerxes I and has generated Megabyzus (II): “The king went hunting and a lion attacked him. As soon as the beast leapt, Megabyzus struck him with a javelin and brought him down. The king was angry because Megabyzus had struck the beast before he could touch it himself; he ordered Megabyzus’ head cut off but, on the pleas of Amestris, Amytis, and others, Megabyzus escaped death by being exiled”.40 It is likely that, as in Assyria, the hunting of lions sometimes took place in game-parks. The existence of such parks in Assyria is clearly demonstrated on the carved stone reliefs from Nineveh dating from the reign of King Ashurbanipal (668-631 BC), where we see lions being released from cages, kept within a confined space and driven towards the king in his chariot. An earlier Assyrian king, Ashurnasirpal II, says in one of his inscriptions that he captured 50 lion cubs on one of his campaigns which he took to Nimrud and kept in cages, presumably for breeding and hunting.41 Similar game-parks or pleasure gardens stocked with wild animals also existed in the Persian Empire. For example, Diodorus Siculus refers42 to a royal ‘paradiseos’ (pleasure garden) at Sidon “in which the Persian kings were wont to take their recreation”. Sidon (now in the Lebanon) was an important centre in the Persian period, with its own mint.43

In the Achaemenid period, precious artefacts are often decorated with lions or are in the shape of lions, for example the gold rhyton supposedly from Hamadan44 (Pl.27/p.192), and the gold dagger (okinakes) also said to be from Hamadan, with a lion ending in two lion’s heads45 (Pl.28/p.194). Also allegedly from Hamadan is a bronze sheet with embossed and chased decoration showing winged lions46 (Pl.34/p.199); it was probably a decorative band that was fixed to a wooden gate in the manner of the famous Balawat Gates from Assyria. A massive bronze stand made up of three conjoined, prowling lions was found in the treasury at Persepolis47 (Pl.29/p.197). When they occur in Achaemenid art, lions are probably ornaments that were originally sewn on to clothing. They include some small gold plaques in the form of lions (Pls.37, 38/p.202), of unknown provenance; a slightly larger gold plaque in the shape of a lion’s head with an openwork mane (Pl.29/p.203), allegedly from the Amarlu district of Gilan; and a curious openwork roundel with added lions sharing the same head (Pl.40/p.204). The rule of the Achaemenid Persian kings was brought to an end by Alexander’s invasion of 331-330 BC, ushering in a short period of Greek domination in Iran. In keeping with earlier Near Eastern tradition, the Greeks were keen to demonstrate their bravery by fighting and killing lions, and Alexander himself, and officers in his army such as Perdiccas and Lynsimacus were renowned for their hunting exploits.48 One of the best-known popular monuments in Iran dates from the so-called Hellenistic period. This is a very battered and worn but greatly celebrated stone lion in Hamadan, known locally as “sang-e shir”. It is thought to be from the top of a funeral monument dedicated to Hephaestion, Alexander’s friend and general who died in Hamadan (Ecbatana) in 324 BC. According to local tradition young women in search of a husband should go and rub their hands on the lion. Possibly of Hellenistic date is a heavy stone cylinder ending in the head of a lion49 (Pl.41/p.206), found in the Frataraka Temple near Persepolis. It is sometimes identified as a weight.

From around 250 BC onwards an Iranian tribe who are known to history as the Parthians began to make tentative incursions that he captured 50 lion cubs on one of his campaigns in this way, with two tear-shaped bulges on the cheek of the lion between the eye and the muzzle. This can be clearly seen, for example, with the foreparts of a lion in lapis lazuli found at Persepolis50 (Pl.30/p.197) and on unprovenanced lion’s heads in ivory (Pl.31/p.198) and carnelian (Pl.32/p.198). Very often the same features can be found on jewellery, such as on bronze bracelets with terminals in the form of lion’s heads (e.g. Pls.35, 36/p.200). More common forms of jewellery and amulets in this period were made from faience, such as an example from Persepolis in the form of a lion’s head (Pl.33/p.198). Such faience amulets are often regarded as a hallmark of the Achaemenid period. A series of gold plaques in the exhibition and dating from the Achaemenid period are probably ornaments that were originally sewn on to clothing. They include some small gold plaques in the form of lions (Pls.37, 38/p.202), of unknown provenance; a slightly larger gold plaque in the shape of a lion’s head with an openwork mane (Pl.29/p.203), allegedly from the Amarlu district of Gilan; and a curious openwork roundel with added lions sharing the same head (Pl.40/p.204). The rule of the Achaemenid Persian kings was brought to an end by Alexander’s invasion of 331-330 BC, ushering in a short period of Greek domination in Iran. In keeping with earlier Near Eastern tradition, the Greeks were keen to demonstrate their bravery by fighting and killing lions, and Alexander himself, and officers in his army such as Perdiccas and Lynsimacus were renowned for their hunting exploits. One of the best-known popular monuments in Iran dates from the so-called Hellenistic period. This is a very battered and worn but greatly celebrated stone lion in Hamadan, known locally as “sang-e shir”. It is thought to be from the top of a funeral monument dedicated to Hephaestion, Alexander’s friend and general who died in Hamadan (Ecbatana) in 324 BC. According to local tradition young women in search of a husband should go and rub their hands on the lion. Possibly of Hellenistic date is a heavy stone cylinder ending in the head of a lion (Pl.41/p.206), found in the Frataraka Temple near Persepolis. It is sometimes identified as a weight.

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a horse or a lion (Pl.42/p.207). In the Parthian and succeeding Sasanian periods lions are also shown on finger-rings which became popular from the Hellenistic period onwards. A ring in the Tanavoli Collection has a lion engraved on the bezel. In about AD 224 the Parthians were overrun by a rival dynasty known as the Sasanians, who were originally based in Fars. Their strong, centralised state was to last for more than 400 years until in turn the Sasanians were conquered by invading Arabs. In the Sasanian period, the hunting of lions was apparently a popular pursuit for kings, princes and nobles, and it features on rock reliefs, on silver dishes and occasionally on stucco decoration.

A rock relief at Sar Mashhad in Fars shows Bahram II (AD 276-293) killing two lions.57 Harper notes58 that David Bivar interpreted this rock relief as a commemoration of Bahram’s victories over the Roman Emperor Carus and his own brother who attempted to usurp the throne, with the two lions symbolising these two enemies, but given the frequency of this sort of scene in Sasanian art this seems rather far-fetched. Another relief of Bahram II at Naqsh-e Rustam,59 showing the king with nobles and members of his family, depicts a scene in which he is fighting off two lions.60 Then, there are a number of silver vessels showing a king or prince on horseback hunting lions. A spectacular silver-gilt dish now in the Iran Bastan Museum, dated to the 4th century AD and found by chance at Sari in Mazanderan in 1954, shows a figure on horseback, probably a royal prince to judge from his fan-shaped headdress, attacking two lions with bow and arrow (Pl.43/p.208). Another silver-gilt dish in the Iran Bastan Museum has a lion in a central roundel surrounded by other smaller animals also in roundels (Pl.44/p.209). Amongst the fine collection of Sasanian and post-Sasanian silverware in the State Hermitage in Petersburg are silver gilt dishes showing Shapur II hunting lions, a Sasanian noble hunting a lion and a boar, and an unidentified king hunting lions.61 A spectacular silver-gilt dish in the British Museum shows a king, probably Bahram V (Bahram Gur), mounted on horseback and holding a lion club in one hand. On the other hand he holds a sword with which he is fighting off a lion and a lions.62 Other examples of silver-gilt dishes with lions are in the Cleveland Museum of Art,63 and in the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin.64 Representations of lions also occur on other types of silver vessel such as a ewer in the Cleveland Museum of Art, which shows a pair of crossed-over lions.65 Another silver-gilt disc in the British Museum, with embossed lion’s head in the centre, is possibly a shield boss; it has four holes for attachment around the edge.66

The stucco (plaster) decoration from a Sasanian manor-house at Hajabad in Hormagan to the east of Shiraz includes a rounded in the form of lion’s head (Pl.49/p.212). A stucco architectural panel showing a crouching lion, now in the Louvre, is of unknown provenance but is possibly from Mesopotamia.67 The respect for lions in the Sasanian period is slightly at odds with the tradition in the Zoroastrian religion, by now dominant in Iran, in which lions are regarded as harmful creatures (khrafstra) along with cats and tigers.68 However that may be, the tradition earlier attested in the Achaemenid period of maintaining luxuriant gardens or parks in which animals were sometimes kept and hunted continued into the Sasanian period, and very likely lions were sometimes kept in these enclosures. For example, there is evidence of a large enclosure surrounded by a mud-brick wall near the rock-carved grotoxes at Taq-e Bostan that were originally part of a palatial hunting lodge, there was a park near the palace at Qasr-e Shirin,69 and there were splendid gardens in the vicinity of the grand Sasanian palace at Ctesiphon in Iraq.

The popularity of lion hunting in the Sasanian period is also attested in the later Shahnameh, written by Firdowsi in about AD 1000 AD. When Bahram V (421-439 AD), otherwise known as Bahram Gur (‘the wild ass’, on account of his love of hunting), claims the throne of Iran, he presses his claim by offering to submit to an ordeal. He proposes that the crown should be placed on the ivory throne of the king of kings, and fierce lions should be tied on either side of the throne. Whosoever can take the crown from between the lions and sit between them shall be king. When the nobles agree, thinking that Bahram will be torn to pieces if he does not have divine support, he kills the two lions with his bull-headed mace, and places the crown on his head.70 This episode is often shown in miniature paintings.

In another Shahnameh story (Bahram Shapur), while out hunting cheetahs Bahram came to a fertile place where neither men nor flocks were to be seen, which made Bahram think there must be lions in the vicinity. No sooner did he think this than a male lion made its appearance with a great roar. Bahram killed the lion with his bow and arrow, at which point his mate roared and sprang at Bahram. He then killed the lions with his sword.

Testifying to the popularity of the lion as an artistic motif in Ancient Iran, lions often feature on cylinder and stamp seals that were used to make impressions on lumps of clay and clay documents. Such seals date from various between the 3rd millennium BC and the Sasanian period (e.g. Pls.45, 46/p210, Pls.47, 48/p.211).

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68. Sarkisrov Curtis 1993: 23
1. Bowl, 3rd millennium B.C.
Chlorite, Height 11.5 cm, Diameter 15.5 cm
Jiroft, Kerman, The National Museum of Iran

2. Ritual Weight, 3rd millennium B.C.
Chlorite, Width 32 cm, Jiroft, Kerman
The National Museum of Iran

3. Ritual Weight, 3rd millennium B.C.
Chlorite, Width 22.5 cm, Weight 3.725 Kg.
Jiroft, Kerman, The National Museum of Iran

4. Standard, 3rd millennium B.C.
Copper alloy, Shahdad, Kerman
The National Museum of Iran
5. Beaker (Situla), Late 2nd millennium B.C.
Copper alloy, Height 15.9 cm
The National Museum of Iran

6. Axe-head, 2nd millennium B.C., Copper alloy
Length 23.7 cm, Saqqez, Kurdistan
The National Museum of Iran
7. Lion Bowl, Early 1st millennium B.C.
Lapis lazuli and gold
Hasanlu, Western Azerbaijan
The National Museum of Iran

8. Lion Bowl, Early 1st millennium B.C.
Stone, Length 32.5 cm, Bowl diameter 18 cm
Kutulakys collection, Reza Abbasi Museum
9. Lion Pin, Early 1st millennium B.C.
Copper alloy and iron
Hasanlu, Western Azerbaijan
The National Museum of Iran

10. Wall-plaque, Early 1st millennium B.C.
Glazed pottery, height 16.1 cm
Hasanlu, Western Azerbaijan
The National Museum of Iran
11. Lion’s Head, Late 2nd millennium B.C.
Gold, Height 8 cm, Marlik, Gilan
The National Museum of Iran
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سرِ شیر، اواخر هزاره دوم پیش از میلاد
طلا، ارتفاع 8 سانتی‌متر
مارلیک، قیلان، موزه ملی ایران

12. Golden Cup, Late 2nd millennium B.C.
Gold, Height 10 cm, Upper diameter 16 cm
Kelardasht, Mazanderan
The National Museum of Iran
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جم زرین، نیمه آخر هزاره دوم پیش از میلاد
طلا، ارتفاع 10 سانتی‌متر، قطر دهانه 16 سانتی‌متر
کلاردشت، مازندران، موزه ملی ایران
13. Disc showing lions
Early 1st millennium B.C.
Copper alloy, Diameter 22 cm, Luristan
The National Museum of Iran

14. Axe-head, Early 1st millennium B.C.
Copper alloy, Length 14 cm, Amol, Gilan
The National Museum of Iran
15. Axe-head, Early 1st millennium B.C.
Copper alloy, Length 12.5 cm, Luristan
- تبر لرستان، اوایل هزاره اول پیش از میلاد
  سانتی متر
  آلیاژ مس، طول

16. Mace-head, Early 1st millennium B.C.
Copper alloy, Height 8.8 cm, Luristan
- گرز، اوایل هزاره اول پیش از میلاد
  سانتی متر
  آلیاژ مس، ارتفاع

17. Axe-head, Early 1st millennium B.C.
Copper alloy, Luristan
- تبر لرستان، اوایل هزاره اول پیش از میلاد
  سانتی متر
18. Plaque, 1st millennium B.C.
Gold, Ziwiyeh, Kurdistan
The National Museum of Iran
- 181 gr. Silver, Height 31 cm, Weight 181 gr.
Ziwiyeh, Kurdistan, The National Museum of Iran

19. Horse Trapping, 1st millennium B.C.
Silver, Height 33 cm, Weight 103 gr.
Ziwiyeh, Kurdistan, The National Museum of Iran
- 103 gr. Silver, Height 33 cm, Weight 103 gr.
Ziwiyeh, Kurdistan, The National Museum of Iran
20. Lion’s Head
1st millennium B.C., Gold
Length 6.5 cm, Weight 78 g.
Ziwiyeh, Kurdistan, The National Museum of Iran
23. Recumbent Lion, 1st millennium B.C.
Ivory, Length 14 cm, Ziwiyeh, Kurdistan
The National Museum of Iran

24. Ritual Ring, 1st millennium B.C., Gold
Height 17.1 cm, Arjan, Behbahan
The National Museum of Iran

21. Lion Statuette, 1st millennium B.C.
Ivory, Length 4.7 cm
The National Museum of Iran

22. Lion’s Head, 1st millennium B.C.
Ivory, Length 4 cm, Ziwiyeh, Kurdistan
The National Museum of Iran

23. Ritual Ring, 1st millennium B.C., Gold
Height 17.1 cm, Arjan, Behbahan
The National Museum of Iran

21. Lion Statuette, 1st millennium B.C.
Ivory, Length 4.7 cm
The National Museum of Iran

22. Lion’s Head, 1st millennium B.C.
Ivory, Length 4 cm, Ziwiyeh, Kurdistan
The National Museum of Iran
25. Base of stand, 1st millennium B.C. Copper alloy Arjan, Behbahan, The National Museum of Iran

26. Beaker, 1st millennium B.C., Copper alloy Height 15.5 cm, Arjan, Behbahan The National Museum of Iran
27. Rhynoceros, Achaemenid, 5th-6th century BC
Gold, Height 21.3 cm, Upper diameter 13 cm
Hamadan, The National Museum of Iran
پیش از میلاد
4-
5- ریتون، هخامنشی، قرن
23- سانتی متر
13- سانتی متر - قطر دهانه
21-٫3
طلا، ارتفاع
همدان، موزه ملی ایران
19. Sword, Achaemenid, 5th-4th century B.C.
Gold, Length 41 cm, Hamadan
The National Museum of Iran

پیش از میلاد 4 تا 5 - شمشیر، هخامنشی، قرن 22 سانتی متر، همدان، موزه ملی ایران
29. Stand with Lions, Achaemenid
5th-4th century B.C., Copper alloy
Height 28 cm
Persepolis, The National Museum of Iran
پایه به شکل سه شیر، هخامنشی
۲۸ سانتی‌متر
تخت جمشید، موزه ملی ایران

30. Lion’s Head, Achaemenid,
5th-4th century B.C., Lapis lazuli, Height 15.5 cm
Persepolis, The National Museum of Iran
پیش از میلاد
۱۵٫۵ سانتی‌متر
تخت جمشید، موزه ملی ایران
31. Lion’s Head, Achaemenid, 5th-4th century B.C., ivory
Length 4.2 cm, Reza Abbasi Museum
پیش از میلاد 4-5 - سرِ شیر، هخامنشی، قرن 18 سانتی متر، موزه رضا عباسی

32. Lion’s Head, Achaemenid, 5th-4th century B.C., Carnelian
Length 4.2 cm, Reza Abbasi Museum
پیش از میلاد 4-5 - سر شیر، هخامنشی، قرن 17 سانتی متر، موزه رضا عباسی

33. Head of Lion God Bes, Achaemenid, 5th-4th century B.C., Faience, 5 × 4 cm
Persepolis, The National Museum of Iran
پیش از میلاد 4-5 - سرِ خدای بِس، هخامنشی، قرن 19 سانتی متر، موزه ملی ایران

34. Decorative band, Achaemenid, 5th-4th century B.C.
Copper alloy, Length 77.5 cm
Hamadan, The National Museum of Iran
پیش از میلاد 4-5 - نوار تزیینی، هخامنشی، قرن 16 سانتی متر، همدان، موزه ملی ایران
Bracelet, Achaemenid
5th-4th century B.C., Gold
Diameter 11.5 cm, Hamadan, The National Museum of Iran

پیش از میلاد
5-4- قرن، دستبند، هخامنشی، طلا، قطر ۱۱.۵ سانتی‌متر، همدان، موزه ملی ایران

Bracelet, Achaemenid
5th-4th century B.C., Gold, Diameter 8.5 cm, Kurdistan, The National Museum of Iran

پیش از میلاد
4-5- قرن، دستبند، هخامنشی، طلا، قطر ۸.۵ سانتی‌متر، کردستان، موزه ملی ایران
37. Plaque, Achaemenid
5th-4th century B.C., Gold, 5 × 5.5 cm
The National Museum of Iran

لا  پیش از میلاد، طلا، 5×5.5 سانتی‌متر، موزه ملی ایران

38. Plaque, Achaemenid
5th-4th century B.C., Gold, 1.4 × 2.5 cm
The National Museum of Iran

لا  پیش از میلاد، طلا، 1.4×2.5 سانتی‌متر، موزه ملی ایران

39. Plaque, Achaemenid
5th-4th century B.C., Gold, 1.3 × 1.7 cm
Shiraz, The National Museum of Iran

لا  پیش از میلاد، طلا، 1.3×1.7 سانتی‌متر، مرز جنوبی خاور

Roundel, Achaemenid
5th-4th century B.C., Gold, Diameter 5 cm
Kurdistan, The National Museum of Iran

مِدال حلقه، تزیین مدور، هخامنشی
1000-500 مِلَقَع دوری‌می‌بانی
قیمت 5 سانتی‌متر، کردستان، موزه ملی ایران
41. Lion Weight, Achaemenid
5th-4th century B.C., Stone
Length 38.5 cm, Weight 4.513 kg.
Persepolis, The National Museum of Iran
- سنگ وزنه به شکل شیر هخامنشی
9-8 پیش از میلاد، سنگ
طول 38.5 سانتی‌متر، وزن 4.513 کیلوگرم
موزه ملی ایران

42. Belt Buckle, Parthian, 1st-2nd century AD
Copper alloy, Width 7.1 cm
- سگک کمربند، قرن 1-2 میلادی
آلیاژ مس، طول 7.1 سانتی‌متر
43. Plate, Sassanid, 5th-6th century A.D.
Silico, Diameter 28.5 cm, Sari (Caspian Sea area)
The National Museum of Iran

44. Plate, Sassanid, 5th-6th century A.D.
Silver gilt, Diameter 25.5 cm
Reza Abbasi Museum
45. Seal, 1st millennium B.C. (?), Stone, 3.9×3.7×0.6 cm

46. Seal, 1st millennium B.C. (?), Stone, 3.4×3.3×1.4 cm

47. Seal with Lion and Snake
3rd - 2nd millennium B.C.
Black stone, 3.9×5.8×2 cm

48. Seal with Lion and Sun
1st-2nd century AD (?), Black stone, Height 2.8 cm
49. Roundel with lion’s head, Sassanid
5th-6th century A.D., Plaster, Diameter 17.8 cm
Hajiabad, Hormozgan
The National Museum of Iran
گچبری با نقش شیر، ساسانی، قرن ۵-۶ میلادی
گچ، قطر ۱۷.۸ سانتی‌متر، حاجی‌آباد، هرمزگان
موزه ملی ایران
سیمین دنیکی با گورک متعلق به دوره هخامنشیان نشان می‌دهد که حیوانات
دبیرخواره‌ها و غزال در ایران باستان نشان‌دهنده بوده که در قرن هجدهم
میلادی را تا دهه‌های قانون نسبت به تاریخ‌نگاری جغرافیایی شناخته شده است.

در بهرام با تیر و یکنده شیر در شاهنامه فردوسی که در حدود ۸۲۰
میلادی می‌گوید، بهرام شاهی‌نامه به تاج بین دو شیر را به دست می‌آورد و بینشان
به دو شیر پیدا می‌شود و نجیب زاده اول بی‌پروا نشان می‌دهد که بهرام پنجم
(بهرام گور) با استفاده از این تجربه در موقعیت های مختلفی استخدام شد.

به همراه با کلیولند سیمین در موزه ایران باستان، شیری را در دایره‌ای مرکزی
شناسانده است که حیوانات و دیگری درون دایره‌ها، گرداگرد آن قرار دارند.

نگاهی دیگری که دنبال به سفر به اینجا نمی‌کند. دیگری درون دایره‌ها، گرداگرد آن قرار دارند.

۲۳۵
از آن‌ها خدایان، خدایان دخترانه و سربازانی که در حفظ حرم و حکومت، در بارگیری و حمل، در نبرد با خیانت، در جنگ، در نبرد غیرنظامی، در جنگ شیعه و سنتی، در حمل و نقل و حضور در جمع‌آوری و هماهنگی های زیادی نقش می‌بungsند. به طور کلی، این مجموعه از شاهین‌ها به دلیل مدل‌وری و ماندگاری در ساختار و طرح‌های نقش‌برداری شده، به عنوان یک کپی مهندسی از حوزه‌های ساختاری و نقش‌برداری شده در حکایت، در جمع‌آوری و هماهنگی های زیادی نقش می‌بungsند. 

از نظر نگارش‌گر، نمودار و نقش‌برداری، شاهین‌ها در این مجموعه نقش‌برداری شده و به عنوان یک مدلی نسبت به حوزه‌های ساختاری و نقش‌برداری شده در حکایت، در جمع‌آوری و هماهنگی های زیادی نقش می‌بungsند. 

به طور کلی، این مجموعه از شاهین‌ها به دلیل مدل‌وری و ماندگاری در ساختار و طرح‌های نقش‌برداری شده، به عنوان یک کپی مهندسی از حوزه‌های ساختاری و نقش‌برداری شده در حکایت، در جمع‌آوری و هماهنگی های زیادی نقش می‌بungsند.
راه‌ی زمین هولورین مسیری از مورد اکنون گزارش‌های اخیر در آن است. اکنون هم از دیدگاه اقتصادی، مسیری مسیری در همکاری‌ها می‌تواند به‌دست آید. 

به‌طور کلی باعث می‌شود که این بزرگ‌ترین امپراتوری ای باشد که جهان تا آن زمان به‌خود دیده بود. و این امپراتوری شاهنشاهی هخامنشی یاد می‌کنند، افزودند، که این شاهنشاهی نام خود را از نیاکان نامدار بهتر است که بررسی خود را از تخت جمشید آغاز کنیم که یکی از مراکز بزرگ هخامنشیان و یکی می‌باشد، چرا که نشان می‌دهد اعضای هیئت یکی از شیر ماده و دو توله‌اش را با خود آورده‌اند.

واحد با تزییناتی مشابه به تن دارد، یعنی با دایره‌های هم مرکز و یک ردیف شیر در حال حرکت در بین که معمولاً به تصویر کشیده می‌شود شاه است، می‌توان تصور کرد که احتمالاً شکار شیر امتیاز ویژه‌ای پادشاه و اربه در حال شکار شیر نشان می‌دهد. «در این بحث‌ها بسیاری در گرفته است و هنوز هیچ توافقی بر سر معنایشان وجود ندارد. آراء مختلف شامل پیروزی اهورامزدا بر اهریمن، نمایش صور فلکی اسد و ثور و پشت سر گذاشتن شب و رسیدن به روز است. ا. د. ه. بیوار درگاهی‌های تخت جمشید نیز تصویر شده‌اند که در آن‌ها در حال نبرد با یک شاهزاده‌ی ایرانی، در میان سنگ نوشته‌هایی از اردشیر شیر چرخانده تا او را نگاه کند. صحنه‌های نبرد شیر و گاو را می‌توان در نمای غربی و جنوبی پلکان غربی کاخ برد. شیر چنگال‌هایش را پشت گاو فرو کرده، گاو هم جلوی تنه‌اش را از روی زمین بلند کرده و سرش را به سوی بهتر است که بررسی خود را از تخت جمشید آغاز کنیم. 

کشف‌شان برای نیاکان تازه‌آمده، از جمله سایبان بالای تخت شاه نیز با نقش شیر تزیین شده‌اند. شیرها بر روی بعضی از نقش‌برجسته‌هایی در مرکز هر قسمت از نمای پلکان‌ها بودند که شاه را به ناحیه‌ای بود که بتواند به بابل ـ پایتخت پادشاهی قدرتمند و ثروتمندِ تمدنی به همین نام در غرب ـ حمله نماید. این تابوت حاوی مقادیر زیادی طلا و نقره بوده است، اما از آنجا که حفاری علمی نبوده، نمی‌توانیم از آنچه پیدا شده به چشم می‌خورد. اشیایی با نقش شیر که گفته می‌شود به زیویه تعلق دارد و در موزه‌ی ملی ایران نگهداری می‌شود.

شاید قابل پیش‌بینی بود که شیر در هنر دوره کوروش یعنی هخامنش گرفته بود. این بزرگ‌ترین امپراتوری ای بود که جهان تا آن زمان به‌خود دیده بود. و این امپراتوری شاهنشاهی هخامنشی، همانند دوران آشوریان و بابلی‌ها، بسیار به تصویر در آمد. نقش شیر هم در چارچوب رسمی، برای هم عناصری از نقاط تحت فرمان ایرانیان را با هم ترکیب می‌کرد. نمونه روی سکه‌ها (نک وستا سرخوش کرتیس، در همین کتاب)، در تخت جمشید و همچنین در آثار هنری بسیاری با شیر به تصویر کشیده شده‌اند. شیرها بر روی بعضی از نقش‌برجسته‌هایی در مرکز هر قسمت از نمای پلکان‌ها بودند که شاه را به ناحیه‌ای بود که بتواند به بابل ـ پایتخت پادشاهی قدرتمند و ثروتمندِ تمدنی به همین نام در غرب ـ حمله نماید. این تابوت حاوی مقادیر زیادی طلا و نقره بوده است، اما از آنجا که حفاری علمی نبوده، نمی‌توانیم از آنچه پیدا شده به چشم می‌خورد. اشیایی با نقش شیر که گفته می‌شود به زیویه تعلق دارد و در موزه‌ی ملی ایران نگهداری می‌شود. این تابوت حاوی مقادیر زیادی طلا و نقره بوده است، اما از آنجا که حفاری علمی نبوده، نمی‌توانیم از آنچه پیدا شده به چشم می‌خورد. اشیایی با نقش شیر که گفته می‌شود به زیویه تعلق دارد و در موزه‌ی ملی ایران نگهداری می‌شود.
با این حال، «مادر» در این حیوان که از طریق زبان عربی به شکار گرفته می‌شود. شاید بهتر است به دست‌بندی‌های سر، شیر بهتر گردد. 

از نظر احتمال، شیر در بخش غالب هزاره دوم پیش از میلاد در بین النهرین آن است که شاه آشوری، آشوربانیپال دوم است، چرا که زیستگاه شیر در گسترده‌ای غرب ایران برای استفاده از ارابه مناسب نبود. گواه رواج شکار شیر در بخش غالب هزاره دوم پیش از میلاد است. 

بر روی یکی از این قدح‌ها ـ که نامی روی آن حک نشده است ـ نقش یک شیر به می‌گفتند (نیاکان مردمی که بعدها ماده و پارس نامیده شدند) از نقاط شمالی شروع به مهاجرت به فلات ایران کردند. مسیر پیشروی آن‌ها در محوطه‌های باستانی مانند حسن‌لو در آذربایجان ثبت شده است. 

تصور بر این است که حدود اواسط هزاره دوم پیش از میلاد، قبایلی که به زبان‌های هندوایرانی سخن‌گویی می‌کردند، در بخش غالب هزاره دوم پیش از میلاد به وسیلهٔ ناسازگاری و ناپایداری اجتماعی و اقتصادی در مکان‌هایی از نقاط شمالی شروع به مهاجرت به فلات ایران کردند. مسیر پیشروی آن‌ها در محوطه‌های باستانی مانند حسن‌لو در آذربایجان ثبت شده است. 

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در دوره بعد (دوره چهارم حسن‌لو) مجموعه‌ای از بناهای ستون‌دار در حیاط‌ها وجود دارند که در میانه سازوبرگ‌های پرن‌نگار اسب گرفته تا عالم‌هایی با نقش حیوان یا تبر، سلاح‌های دیگر و سنجاق‌های تزیینی کشف می‌شود.

یکی از این قدح‌ها که نامی روی آن حک نشده است، نقش یک شیر به می‌گفتند (نیاکان مردمی که بعدها ماده و پارس نامیده شدند) از نقاط شمالی شروع به مهاجرت به فلات ایران کردند. مسیر پیشروی آن‌ها در محوطه‌های باستانی مانند حسن‌لو در آذربایجان ثبت شده است.

بنابراین، در دوره بعد (دوره چهارم حسن‌لو) مجموعه‌ای از بناهای ستون‌دار در حیاط‌ها وجود دارند که در میانه سازوبرگ‌های پرن‌نگار اسب گرفته تا عالم‌هایی با نقش حیوان یا تبر، سلاح‌های دیگر و سنجاق‌های تزیینی کشف می‌شود. 

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شیر ایرانی به شیر تقریباً تا اواسط قرن بیستم میلادی در ایران وجود داشته اما اکنون منقرض شده است. شیر آسیایی هندوستان منسوب می‌شده و زیرگونه‌ای به نام پانته‌آ لئو پرسیکا به شمار می‌رفته است. تصور بر این است که این شیر یال‌ی سیاهی داشته. به گفته اسکندر فیروز، شیر آسیایی از دو نظر با شیر آفریقایی تفاوت دارد:

1. در دوران معاصر شیر تنها در جنوب غربی ایران، در استان خوزستان و فارس، دیده شده است. زیستگاه‌های محبوب آن‌ها نیزارهای رودخانه‌های خوزستان، دامنه‌های جنگلی رشته‌کوه زاگرس و دشت ارژن، بین شیراز و کازرون، بوده است. شکار شیر بیشتر در این مناطق می‌باشد.

2. رودهای نر بالغ چین‌شکمی مشخصی دارند و یالشان تا روی پیشانی نمی‌آید.

3. در نواحی شمالی شیردامنه‌ای از درخت‌های گز، صنوبر و اقاقیا، و مشهور است که مخفیگاه رود کرخه در مجاورت شوش است. شیر‌هاست. در واقع، من چندین بار ردپای شیرها را آنجا دیده ام و مردم منطقه از این محل دوری می‌کنند.

4. لیارد و لفتوس، هر دو در بین النهرین عراق به حفاری مشغول بودند و به حضور شیر در آنجا اشاره دارند. لفتوس به گفته ویلیام لُفتوس، که از دهه 1231 تا 1229 ویلیام کنت لُفتوس، که از دهه 1231 تا 1229 در شوش به حفاری مشغول بوده، گزارش داده بود. او در جای دیگری می‌گوید وجود شیرها در بستر قدیمی در شوش را حفاری دیده است.

5. منطقه رود کرخه در مجاورت شوش آستن بر این است که نمادpentaptych شیرهاست. در واقع، من چندین بار ردپای شیرها را آنجا دیده ام و مردم منطقه از این محل دوری می‌کنند.

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7. دکتر جان کرتیس از سال 1989 تا سال 2011 هواچراغ دار بخش شیری در موزه ایران می‌باشد. او هم اکنون مدیرعامل بنیاد میراث ایران است. کرتیس کتاب‌ها و مقالات بسیاری در زمینه هنر و باستان‌شناسی ایران باستان منتشر کرده و از اعضای آکادمی بریتانیاست.