

An Analysis of the Bird Symbol in Ilkhanid Coins from the Perspective of Religious Discourse based on the Model of Ervin Panofsky

Abstract

Among the issues that need to be further studied in identifying the philosophy of existence of various bird motifs on Ilkhanid coins, is the study of religious, political and cultural foundations of patriarchs in different periods of their rule and its direct impact on coins. The aim of the present study is to examine the bird symbol from the perspective of numismatics, considering the frequent changes and changes in the discourse of religion, and to answer the question of whether the Ilkhanid government pursued a specific religious policy and whether Were religious issues tolerant or did they cause more religious turmoil? The present article takes a different approach to the conventional methods of numismatics, interactions and competitions between different religions common during Ilkhanids has been studied and analyzed in the form of various bird motifs. This research is based on the purpose of "fundamental-theoretical" and in terms of method of "content analysis" and based on the views of "Ervin Panofsky", an iconographic reading of the bird motifs of Ilkhanid coins. The method of collecting information is library. Results This study shows that during the rule of Yasa, the motifs of birds on coins were multiplied with martyrdom and in the Islamic era, religious tendencies were more strongly reflected in the form of Islamic rituals, verses and names of Rashidun caliphs along with bird motifs. All of this can be attributed to the religious tolerance of the Mongols, their expediency, or their confusion and apolitics in the field of religion.

Keywords: Coin, Bird, Religion, Panofsky, Ilkhanid.

Research aims:

- ١- Analysis of the bird symbol from an iconographic perspective based on the model of Ervin Panofsky.
- ٢- Investigating the influence of different religions of the Ilkhanid period and comparing them on the selection of bird motifs struck on coins.

Research questions:

- ١- What does the visual element of the bird on the coins have to do with the culture and religion of the Ilkhanid period?
- ٢- What effect did the religious developments of the Ilkhanid period have on the changes in the bird's pattern on the coins of the Ilkhanid period?

Introduction

Ilkhanid coins are among the best coins of the Islamic era in terms of the variety of concepts, symbols, aesthetical lines and letter design, which should be investigated separately from the perspective of iconography. One of the most applied themes are bird motifs. Of course, this pattern has also undergone changes from the beginning to the end of the Ilkhanid rule. An examination of the motifs on historical coins suggests that each of these motifs is related to a subject or a sacred cultural, religious, or political belief. Thus, a semiotic study of such motifs can reveal a part of the cultural and political history of the nation and the developments it has gone through. The reign of the Ilkhanid who ruled Iran for more than a century is one of the most complex periods in the history of Iran in terms of culture, and the reason for this should be considered the deep cultural differences between the Mongols and Muslim Iranians. With these interpretations, the study of coins of this period and the symbol of the bird can shed light on the developments of this historical period. This research seeks to answer the question regarding the visual element of the bird on Ilkhanid coins and their relation with the culture and religion of the mentioned period. The researcher's hypothesis states that the use of the visual element of the bird varies under the influence of common religions during the Ilkhanid rulers; either applied with religious proverbs or seen individually on the coins.

Regarding the background of the present study, it should be said that an independent study with this title has not been written so far, nonetheless, several studies have examined the coins of the Ilkhanid period. Sharafi (٢٠١٢) in his article "Coin minting system and monetary exchanges in the Ilkhanid era" has acknowledged that the most important element of the coin minting system and monetary exchanges in the Ilkhanid era, metal coins including gold, silver and copper in the period, also, in a short period, banknotes also come to its aid. The article attempts to understand the

situation of the coinage system and monetary exchanges in the Ilkhanid era and their most important features. Salehi (۱۳۸۴) in his doctoral dissertation with the guidance of Javad Neyestani of Tarbiat Modares University entitled: "Elemental analysis of Ilkhanid coins to understand the economic and political situation of the time studied by PIXE method" has stated that the best economic period in the studied coins belongs to Ghazan and the biggest financial decline occurred during the time of Ahmad Taghodar. Ahmad Nikgoftar (۱۳۸۹) in his article: "Identification and introduction of coins minted in Esfarayen" published by Rahyan Sabz is a study of Ilkhanid coins minted in the area of Esfarayen. Ali Akbar Sarfaraz and Fereydoon Avarzamani (۱۳۸۹) in their book "Iranian coins from the beginning to the time of Zandieh" by Samt Publications briefly and usefully introduces the coins of each period. Moreover, Hosseini Sarabi (۱۳۸۸) in the dissertation "A study of the administrative and organizational system of the Ilkhanids based on numismatic evidence" by Mahnaz Hosseini Sarabi at the University of Tehran with Professor Hassan Karimian in which they studied and analyzed historical texts and introduced ۱۳۸۸ coins from the Ilkhanid era. Abbas Sarafrazi (۱۳۸۴) Assistant Professor of History at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, has conducted a study entitled "Political, Religious Tendencies of the Ilkhans based on Ilkhanid coins" in his study he came to the conclusion that Ilkhanid coins, as one of the indicators for identifying the political, religious and economic tendencies of this period, have a special place in the study of Ilkhanid history, but then again, a special analysis and comparison based on the effect of ritual beliefs and religious principles in the emergence of motifs, arrangement and design of letters of these two periods of Iranian coins has not been accomplished professionally and the type and amount of this effect has not been compared in the Ilkhanid period. Therefore, the research is a new work according to the study of the effect of religious beliefs on religious themes and rituals.

The method applied in this research is based on the purpose of developmental research and is methodologically analytical-historical, moreover, based on iconological achievements, the relationship between culture and religion with bird motifs on coins is analyzed. The evaluations are based on library resources and field research. In this research, by researching Ilkhanid coins based on an iconographic approach, the connection between the theme of the work and the form is revealed. On this basis, the coins of the Ilkhanid period are viewed as pictorial text. Thematic analysis of coins has been investigated using numerous historical sources and articles focusing on the study of visual elements.

Conclusion

In the history of Iran after Islam, the Ilkhanid government was the first government whose rulers in the first period were not only non-Muslim, but in some cases hostile to Islam and also called followers of other religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism. During the rule of Yasa, the motifs of birds on coins were minted with martyrdom and in the Islamic era with martyrdom and the names of the righteous caliphs. The religious developments of this period were generally due to the political situation. Although Genghis Khan's law recommended religious tolerance and non-adherence to a particular religion or denominations, the Mongol rulers in Iran treated Muslims differently. In the Islamic era, the religious tendencies of the Mongol Ilkhanids were more strongly reflected in the form of verses, religious rites and motifs. Various bird motifs such as peacocks, pigeons, hawks and storks in different religions and sects have their own unique iconographic analyzes and interpretations that during the rule of Yasa due to the lack of religious inclination of Ilkhanid rulers to Islam and class. The ruler is multiplied by religious rites, which, in addition to all this, show the emergence of the bird motif under the influence of pre-Islamic Iranian civilization, other religions (Shamanism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity), while in the Islamic era, some bird motifs have been engraved without the presence of Islamic rituals and only with emphasis on the position of the Ilkhanids (Figure ۱۳). In addition to extreme religious bigotry and the emergence of common religious motifs and elements of their religion, the Mongol Ilkhanids, like birds on the other side of the coin, seem to have forgotten everything and the most important religious rites of Muslims, which are among the basic principles of their beliefs. Besides the bird motif, they are placed on the other side of the coin and sometimes around the image, all of which can be attributed to the first religious tolerance of the Mongols, second to their expediency, and third to its confusion and politicization.

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