

Research article

# Analytical evaluation of Cereal Goddess In Iranian Ancient myths and culture

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## Abstract

Agriculture and animal husbandry are the important and effective factors in human life from the beginning up to now. It has been remained according to the current situation and industrial changes. Most of anthropologists consider a great relationship between environment and origin of foods changes and women (From hunting to agriculture). According to the findings any signs of fertility, birth and live are pointing out to the name of a goddess. Therefore it is possible to say that ancient goddess play cultural and civil roles in human life. Iranian plateau had also innovative situations by focusing on spiritual and /or materialistic roles about facing of ancient Iranians with five gahambar. This paper intends to find a suitable answer for the real origin of cereal goddess in mythical Iranian culture. The research method of this paper is library, documentary and field one.

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**Key words:** Goddess, Fertility, Cereal goddess, Iranian Plateau, Anthropology, Culture, Myth, Ceremony

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## Introduction

Due to the various roles in culture and civilization of different societies from the beginning of creation, Cereal and Cereal goddess were the center of attention of researchers and scientists in different fields such as environmental anthropology. Like other Indian & Iranian and also Indo-European myths, Cereal goddess had

lots of economic, cultural, social and even political effects. Iranian plateau is one of the main origins of human relations with nature and also various ceremonies, languages, dialects, beliefs, myths and history including civil and native elements. It seems it has not been studied deeply up to now. This paper intends to find out suitable answers for manner of formation of cereals from its holy position in culture and language of people in order to find out better results from anthropology viewpoint and recognition base.

### **Research questions**

- 1- Why cereals and cereal goddess do have a spiritual position in Iran?
- 2- Is there any Iranian or religious origin for cereals and their spiritual position?
- 3- How many Iranian traditional ceremonies are based upon cereal & cereal goddess:
- 4- What is the current situation of cereal goddess ceremonies in Iranian public culture?

### **Theoretical framework**

This paper has been organized by focusing on library study method and functionalism theoretical framework of Bronislaw Malinowski and interpretivism of Clifford Geertz and diffusionism of Whistler.

### **Discussion (Analysis)**

Anthropologists believe that first people had various ceremonies and habits for their safety, survival and even entertainment through which they found national, native and/or tribal unity. Then all of the mentioned habits changed into a culture. One of the mentioned ceremonies was respecting of cereals which was changed into cereal goddess due to its special importance in human life. According to the findings, respecting of bread is originated in ancient myths and oral literature. There are some footprints in creation myths about mutual relationship of human being and environment in management of natural phenomenon for which the god and goddess are responsible. Raining and lots of products were the social and cultural worries of nations and real reasons for creation of specific ceremonies and as a gift for responsible gods. According to the diffusionism theory, it is necessary to search cultural history of a society and its relations with other societies for better recognition of current properties of a nation. (Rooholamini, 118:2000). Some of the scientists who were studying diffusionism theory, geographical distribution, immigration and cultural aspects believed that cultures are various parts of a puzzle with various origins and histories.

A part of cereal creation and its supporting goddess has been mentioned in creation history. Cereal goddess has been mentioned in one of the clay tablets at Sumer as “Lehar” for herd god and his sister named as “Eshnan” for cereals. (Kramer, 1961: 134, 135, 136). As a result the hidden effects and native examples of herds and cereals including Eshnan and Lehar are the considered theories for Bronislaw Malinowski. Malinowski has specified a relationship between necessity and nature. Also according to the hidden effects of any phenomenon in cultural system of nature and human being, Malinowski believes that none of phenomenon have the same effect.

There is a female god for goodness and blessing in Sumerian creation myths. Upon the appearance of **Eshnan** on the land, the secret of cereal has been found out as well. Due to the victory of cereal goddess in a conflict between herd and cereal goddesses, it is the sign of priority and life fixedness based upon agriculture and animal

husbandry and perhaps a start of settling and rural life. Any interpretation of these two life elements is an example of various ceremonies (Landing of human beings from caves into deserts and settling of culture of 5000 years before at Iranian plateau).

Exploration of wheat and barley has been related to Isis as the fertility goddess in Egyptian myths. There are various nicknames for Isis in tablets as follows: Creator of chlorophylls, Green goddess, Goddess of bread, Lady of beer and Lady of abundance. According to Brugsch, she is not only the creator of chlorophylls of vegetables but also the creator of green farms of cereals like a goddess. (Freezer, 2007, 433, 434).

Isis assisted his brother and his wife in promotion of civilization and taught lots of home arts to women. (Bajelan Farokhi, 1996, 83). Dionysus is the god of grape and wine. (Parallel myths, 2007, 35). Ancient Greeks considered Dionysus as the god of cultivation and cereals. (Freezer, 2007: 445)

Demeter taught the secret of grain to Athens people for the first time and promoted such a fruitful discovery by sending Tyrolmus for this purpose. Most of Greece cities presented their first harvest of wheat and barley to double goddesses of Demeter and Persephone for thanking of the mentioned gift to them. Also there were some warehouses for keeping the major presents. Sicilians performed Demeter festival at the beginning of seeding and also Persephone festival at the time of harvesting. (Freezer, 2007: 456, 457). There is a sign of a great relation between seed and cereals in a part of Rigveda songs. Wishing the seed to be irrigated and create lots of grains. (Jalali Naeini, 1993, Mandalai Dehem, Song 184). Clark Wissler considered this cycle as a process of cultural promotion and distribution of important elements for mythical communication through immigration or confluence.

As the specialists of English diffusionism school, Smith (1871-1922) and Perri (1887-1949) and Rivers (1864-1922) believed that most of civilization signs at Egypt and then at Greece have promoted by those people who had relationships with other people. English diffusionists believed that it is rare to have a parallel promotion of a cultural property in two areas far from each other. They believed that innovation is not a heritage case among people. Therefore people prefer to borrow any innovations from other cultures.

The whole civilization includes various innovations in culture which was appeared at Nile valley. Egypt is the origin of world culture and mother of art, weapon making and law making. All other nations obtained their culture and civilization from Egypt like sun worshiping and other samples. This theory was not accepted anymore and it is rejected at present. (Askari Khanghah & Kamali, 259: 1999 and Roohol Amini: 119, Clode, 2003: 83,88)

This paper intends to consider any equality of two traditions or beliefs as a human need in two different parts of the world. As a result, it may consider confluence as much powerful as possible. Malinowski considers "Need" as the origin of an "Organization". Therefore a humanistic need is changed into a term as Goddess and then any need in cereals may cause to create cereals goddess. Chinese people consider Kuan Yeen as the goddess of cereals in native myths. (Christy, 1994: Pp. 150-151).

The importance of cereals has been pointed out in a part of Avesta-Vendidad- in Zoroastrian rules and regulations.

Thou! As the governor of the world!

Where is the third place of the land in which there is merry?

Ahura Mazda answered: It is a place in which there are lots of wheat and plants and trees and fruits.

It is a place in which a person irrigate dry lands and drainage it. (Doostkhah, 1995, Para4)

It has been mentioned as follows in Vendidad, third part of Avesta about cereals and Ahura's power:

Thou, Ashvan! Which food is enough for Mazda's religion?

Ahura answered: Thou, Zoroaster! It is wheat. A man who cultivate wheat, he may cultivate Mazda's religion as complete as possible. He may enrich Mazda's religion as equal as ten thousand gifts. "When wheat is growing, demons may escape. When it is changed into flour, demons may morn and when there is a wheat harvest, demons may vanish". Also it has been mentioned in another part that: "When the holy cow died, about fifty types of wheat and 12 types of medicinal plants grown accordingly. (Faranbagh Dadegi, 1990: 65). It has been mentioned in characteristics of Zadspram that: "When holy cow was died, about fifty types of wheat and 12 types of medicinal plants grown accordingly. (Rashed Mohassel, 2011: 46).

In other words and in contrast with today scientific attitude, cereals are considered in the group of vegetables. Zoroastrianism believes that cereals are special forms of Ahura Mazda creation because of their importance and glory. Because of great participation of bulls in ancient agriculture (Plowing and squashing and ...). Bull is the goddess of cereals in ancient Iran and may indirectly consider it as the goddess of cereals. Franz Boas stated all determining dimensions of any relationships between both cultural systems which are in contact with each other. With presenting a definition for the considered cultural pattern, American distributors found out any conditions in which borrowing depends upon both distributor and receiver groups. (Roohol Amini: 120, 121 and Cloud, 83, Askari & Kamali: 260).

By focusing on Iranian myth (Mitra) and according to the Austrian School, the author of this paper believes that the origin of relevant ceremonies are related to cereals and goddesses of cereals which is probably because of civil and cultural records of ancient Iranians in following up Zurvanism, Mehr and Zoroastrian at Iranian plateau. As the founders of Austrian School, Robert Fritz and Wilhelm Smith believed that primary humanistic culture was originated in Asia. The real reasons of any transfer of which to other lands of the world are great immigrations, transactions and so on. Distribution Theory has been changed into a historical and famous composed theory at Germany. The followers of this school believe that real elements of culture are obtained from different cultures.

They consider any archeological discovers as much useful as possible for finding more elements and cultural parts. By the way, Hadish is the only goddess which has been pointed out directly in Avesta. Also we have Hadish as the supporter and watchman of cereals and agricultural products in Iranian myths. This part is translation of Pahlavi text from Avesta. The relevant Avesta one has been lost. (Mazda Pour, 2002, 22)

It has been also stated about Hadish in a Pahlavi narration that: "It is obvious that a great man has been created for cereals. When demons obtained cereals by force for further destruction, Hormozd found a solution and requested Hadish for keeping of cereals. Then Minoo Radi and Hadish and Dehman Afarin started their fights. They could defeat demons and make them tired. (Mirfakhraei, 2001: 14)

Such an assumption about Iranian myths (Mitra and bull) are common in various ceremonies like giving syrup to a calf at Komijan district of central part of Iran. Komijan people consider a deep relationship between human being and herd at the first day of plowing through a female ceremony and accompanied with various songs and dances and classic prays. Komijan is a land related to Tats and prior to Mads (First millennium BC). One of the hidden applications of the mentioned ritual (giving syrup to a calf) is granting a gift by Komijan women at Iran for making further reconcile relationship with cereals. Malinowski believed that such a ceremony has a cultural and hidden relation with human being along with five serious benefits as in mentioned ceremonies by Joseph Campbell.

Joseph Campbell has also various ideas about ceremonies without any discrepancies with Eliade. Oskar G. Bracket has divided any benefits of ritual ceremonies into five groups in world theater history as follows:

- 1- Ritual is a form of knowledge.
- 2- Ritual is a form of teaching method.
- 3- Ritual is applied for controlling any probable future accidents (Like raining, flood, draught, victory in war and ...)
- 4- Rituals are mostly for respecting a metaphysical force, victory in hunting and history of nation.
- 5- Rituals can be fun and enjoyable. (Bracket, 32: 1984)

On the other hand, the records of these two cultural phenomenon (herd & cereals) return back not only to prior to Zoroaster and Mitra but also to the ancient signs of the same in 5-thousand years clay vessels which were found out at burned Zabol city. There is a fundamental and critical speech between a goat and a date tree. It means speeches of last third millennium remained in culture and civilization of ancient Iranians along with some pictures of herds and cereals for survival, safety, respecting of martyrs, ideology and finally amusement and fun. Therefore there is a wide scope of attitude about Mitra based upon real origin of herds and cereals in Iranian plateau in accordance with Iranian Mehr Culture while it was promoted at half of Europe. Such an assumption could not reject any other myths like Gilgamesh in Sumerian tablets and also Mesopotamia rules and regulations. Current allegorical elements on them such as cow, moon, sun, fire, scorpion, dog and snake are about heavy scale of herds (cows) against 52 types of vegetables and herds. The ideal point of these two elements is survival of animal husbandry and agriculture with Iranian Culture.

The other civil sign of cereals and herds in Iranian mythical culture is a respecting ceremony under the title of "Harvest Feast" once per year on the first day of Tir (22.June). It is glorious at Zolf Abad of Farahan at Central province of Iran. All farmers and animal shepherds of Farahan participate in this feast accompanied with their family members on 21.June and make family and tribal speeches up to the morning. Then in the morning they begin their feast by spraying water on each other and selling of agricultural tools specially pruning hook,

thrasher and animal tools and also wrestling of heroes and harvesting of wheat. Women play the major roles in that ceremony.

Followings are three major bases of participants in harvest feast at Zolf Abad of Farahan:

- A) Women
- B) Farmers
- C) Shepherds

“Harvest feast” is the only remained item of Iranian Mithraism Ceremony at Iran. One of the most specific indexes of Cereal Goddess in Iranian culture is Nakhor Gatirmak Ceremony through which women of Eisa Abad as a subsidiary of Komijan manage to steal neighboring villages’ cows at the time of draught and for requesting rain from metaphysical forces. At the time of draught all lactating women play the role of Cereal goddess for prevention from death of cereals. By the use of threatening techniques, they try to threaten shepherds and apply spiritual forces by wearing old clothes and attack neighboring villages and steal their lactating cows. They imprison the cows.

Then they search for their children up to the morning and request people to help them. Some of the special signs of first power of cereal goddess are great needs of mothers to their children and vice versa, the need of calves to lactating cows, public stress and threats of shepherds up to falling down the milk bows along with the rain sound (Similarity Law of James Freezer) in Iranian culture. Mohammad Aref considers this ceremony as a clear example of functionalism idea of Bronislaw Malinowski and similar law of Sir. James Freezer. (Aref, 2012). It is repeatedly obvious in the life of various nations such as Kurd, Mazani, Khooji, Gilak, Azari and Fars. Rather than, bread has a special position in Iranian culture.

From “Daroon” bread at Sasanid time and its registration at the Book of Arda Viraf up to now, all Iranians assume relevant techniques of dried breads as fundamental and cultural as possible, they are notifying the cereal goddess and further changes in applications from one nation to another. Iranians consider it a sin to put dried breads at waste baskets because they are worry about the reaction of cereal goddess. Like the same in Islamic culture, Manavi, Zoroastrian, Mehr and Zarvani in which wheat and herd are really holy and glorious. By the way and because of the entrance of industry and technology in agricultural and animal husbandry culture, there is a reduction in relevant ceremonies of agriculture and animal husbandry except for a little number, the remained are respected in hidden culture of people.

## **Conclusion**

According to the result, it is obvious that Iran is the origin of cereals and cereal goddess at Middle Asia. This is one of the major reasons for glory of wheat and flour at Iranian culture from ancient up to now. Furthermore, most of ceremonies of cereal and wheat are performed still by Iranian nations. It is even common for various nations to put breads in a cloth and tie it around the waist of bride as a sign of blessing and security. It means that she is granting blessing and security of Cereal goddess to her home. As a result, cereals have still a holy and glorious position in Iranian culture.

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