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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Angel Rain (Tishtar): Case Study of Boghe of Gilan and Saghanevars of Mazandaran

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Abstract: The mythical characters with the names of God or angels with multiple hands are seen in different cultures. In a number of religious buildings of Gilan and Mazandaran, there is an iconographic image with upright hands, depicted with inscription, *Angel of Rain*. In the Iranian mythology, *Anahita* is a special angel of water, and *Tishtar*, is the angel of rain. The purpose of this study is to examine the function of multi-handed humanoid characters and motifs in Iranian, Hindu and Buddhist cultures. In all of these cultures, numerous hands indicate helping and hands rising to signify prayer for divine mercy. The purpose of this study is to investigate the function of multi-faceted human characters and motifs in Iranian, Hindu and Buddhist cultures.

Keywords: Boghes of Gilan, Saghanevar of Mazandaran, Angel of rain, Hinduism, Buddha, Karbala.

Introduction

A number of *Boghes* in Gilan with a square or square-rectangular plan in eastern regions with designs on plaster with the themes of the suffering of Imam Hussein (AS) and his family on the day of Ashura, the role of an angel, the ascension of the Prophet with a Buraq, riding a horse, the multi-headed dragon, Hazrat Ibrahim (AS) are sacrificing Ismail (AS), Imam Reza (AS) in the Ma'mun Assembly, etc. According to the date written next to these motifs, they belong to the period of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (1849-1897). The *Saghanefars* of Mazandaran are small wooden buildings that were built only in central regions of Mazandaran and in the area of Imamzadehs and following the local and traditional architecture of the area and according to the histories contained in them in the Qajar period, especially the period of Naser al-Din Shah. The paintings in this building have religious themes such as motifs related to the mourning mirrors of Karbala, rewards and punishments for good and bad deeds, images

of angels, the image of Imams (AS) and the Infallibles (AS) and Quranic stories. Religious and Persian and national religious narrations such as the epic characters of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and the myths of ancient Iran, such as the battle of Rostam and the white demon, Garshasb and the dragon, Fereydoun and Zahak, are more gods.

The religion of Indo-Iranian tribes is preserved in a collection of ancient Hindi hymns called *Rigveda* and ancient Persian hymns called *Yashta*. The philosophical heritage and the Indian culture were influenced by two origins: First, the origin of the *Vedas* and the *Aryan* associated with Indian and European culture, and second, the native pre-Aryan culture, which is associated with the civilization of the *Mohenjodaro*¹ and *Harappa*², the Indus Valley civilization³, depends on the ancient civilizations of *Mesopotamia* and the *Hindu* religion is affected (Ions, 1967:13). There are thus many similarities between the beliefs of the two lands

¹ *Mohenjodaro* is located in Indus, meaning Hill of the Dead (seyed Sajjadi, 2009: 88).

² -Harappa is located in the northern parts of the Indus River and 600 km from *Mohenjodaro* (Ibid: 100).

³ The Indus civilization was formed in the third millennium BC in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent and the areas that today form part of Pakistan (Ibid: 2).

of India and Iran. It should be noted that some of the gods initially had a common role for the two peoples, but after the separation of their peoples, their role in the two lands of Iran and India is largely changing. There are many gods in Hindu religion depicted with many hands, but the role of the gods with this feature in Iran is rare. The examples studied in this paper are related to the *Qajar* era, and before this era, this role has clearly not been seen in Iranian art. According to the inscription accompanying these motifs, the motifs are called rain angles. The research question is whether in the Hindu religion or neighboring civilizations these motifs are used as god or angel of rain? Another important question is why this motif is employed in these two special types of monuments: the *Boghe* of Gilan, *Saghanefar* of Mazandaran, and this geographic region? To answer to the first question, it must be said that the gods with

many hands of the Buddha and Hindu religion do not directly express the God of rain, but are associated with blessing. These gods have in their hands a jug of water, shellfish, lily flowers and objects that directly and indirectly symbolize water. The role of angel rain in Gilan and Mazandaran is influenced by the climate of the region as well as the livelihoods of people, which relies on agriculture and water. But the presence of this role in these two specific species is directly related to the *Karbala*⁴ incident.

Some Gods with Many Hands in Buddhism and Hinduism

China and India have a great deal of cultural affinity with Iran. The role of gods and angels with several hands in these cultures is noted here, with some listed examples.

⁴ The uprising and martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS) played a decisive role in the history of Islam and Shiism, especially in the first centuries of Islam (Raof, 2020: 287). Imam Hussein (AS) was hostile to Mu'awiyah and his family due to the Imam's opposition to the succession of Mu'awiyah's son, Yazid, and his lack of allegiance to him. After Mu'awiyah's death, Yazid bothered the Imam and his companions (Tabari, 1988: 338). Due to their dissatisfaction with Yazid and his

lack of allegiance to him, the Kufis wrote many letters to the Imam and demanded that the Imam enter Kufa (Dinuri, 1959: 230). Imam and his family moved from Mecca to Kufa, but on Yazid's orders, their caravan was stopped in a dry and waterless place called the desert of Karbala. Finally, on the tenth of Muharram 61 AH, Imam Hussein (AS) along with 72 of his companions was martyred by Yazid soldiers (Blazori, 1996: 411).

Buddhism

Avalokitesvara

The greatest *Bodhisattvas*⁵ which venerated by *Mahayana* and *Vajrayana* schools, is called *Avalokitesvara*. The deity is seen as infinitely compassionate and always ready to come to the aid of suffering beings in the material world. *Avalokitesvara* was depicted as having

a thousand eyes to see the troubles of the world and a thousand arms to relieve them. *Avalokitesvara* was respected in Chinese as the *Akvan-yin (Kuan-yin)* as a woman with many hands (Hawkins, 2003: 51; Piggott, 1973: 50). Nowadays, in Southeast Asian countries, there are celebrations for the dance performances of this character (Figure 1).



Fig. 1. *Avalokitesvara* (Hawkins, 2003: 51).

⁵ - In *Mahayana* Buddhism, a being who has completed all things necessary to enter *Nirvana*, but chooses to postpone his/her own reward in order to help other

beings to achieve it as well. Such a being would postpone his or her own entrance to *Nirvana* in order to aid suffering beings (Hawkins, 2003: 115).

Rain Commander in Chinese Mythology

In the Chinese mythology, there is a Rain Commander who lives in mountain slope, wearing yellow and blue shirts, flak jackets, blue and yellow hat. In the legend, sprinklers fly over the earth and irrigate the ground. In another story, the commander of the rain on the right hand has a sword and in the left hand it is a sprinkler and watering the ground (Christie, 1968: 115). The sword is associated with water and dragons (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982: 366).

Hinduism

Shiva

Shiva is the same with *Rudra*, and is equally reminiscent of the pre-Aryan, yogic Lord of the Beasts deity, while his consorts resemble the sacrifice exacting mother-goddesses of the same period (Ions, 1967: 39). *Shiva* presides over the destruction of the universe and can be an awesome figure. But his destructive function can also have a creative aspect; he can destroy illness, enemies, bad luck. The *Nataraja* images of *Shiva* as the performer of the cosmic dance (Turner, 1998: 558). *Shiva* is depicted with several arms. The movement of

the arm is one of the most effective magical states (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982: 76).

Brahma

In the hierarchy of the Hindu gods, *Brahma* is revered as equal to *Vishnu* and *Shiva*. He is the god of wisdom, his heaven is said to contain in a superior degree all the splendors of the other heavens of the gods and of the earth. *Brahma* rides a goose and is depicted with red skin and wearing white robes. He has four arms and carries the *Vedas* and his scepter, or a spoon, or a string of beads, or a bow, or a water jug (Ions, 1967: 41).

Vishnu

In the Indian mythology, the superior power is *Vishnu*. In the Hindu creation myth, *Vishnu* appears in three forms: in the form of *Brahma*, the Creator of life on earth; in the form of *Vishnu*, the preserver of life on earth; in the form of *Shiva-Rodera*, a devastating life on earth (Rosenberg, 1994: 627). *Vishnu*, The Protector of the Universe, The Immortal, The Unknowable, The Indecisive, The Invisible, The Eternal, The Omniscience, The Omnipotent, The Absolute Ruler, The Pure

and The Glorious, The Center of The World, The Creator, The Protector of The Universe, and The Axis of Connection of The Components of The Universe, He guarantees the continuity (Zekrgoo, 1998: 77, 78).

The significance of this act is amplified to include other functions in the epics, where *Vishnu* is equated with *Prajapati*, the creator and supreme god. *Vishnu* is the cosmic ocean, *Nara*, which spread everywhere before the creation of the universe, but is also called *Narayana*, “moving in the waters”; *Vishnu* has four hands; one holds a conch shell⁶; the second hand holds a discus⁷ or quoit weapon; the third hand holds a club or mace; the fourth hand holds a lotus (Ions, 1967: 46, 47). The sword of *Vishnu* is a sword is the symbol of pure consciousness and the destruction of ignorance (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982: 366). Another deity who figures prominently in south-east *Asian Hinduism* is *Shri, Vishnu* consort, whose name is synonymous with prosperity and fertility and who plays an important part in ceremonies in connection

with rice cultivation, marriage and childbearing (Turner, 1998: 562).

Yama

In *Hindu* belief *Yama* is not the benevolent figure who welcomes the dead to heaven. He occasionally sets forth himself, his green skin dark against his blood-red robes, coppery eyes staring out of his grisly face. He rides a buffalo and has four hands. He carries a heavy mace and a noose, which he puts round the necks of his victims in order to drag them back to his abode (Ions, 1967: 77). *Yama* is most revered in *Persia* for his thousand- years rule over the earth, a rule characterized by peace and plenty. *Yama* stands as the ideal prototype of all kings, the model for all rulers to emulate. In *Persia* as in *India* he appears as a king rather than as a god (Hinnells, 1997: 34).

Surya

In *Hindu* times the god of the sun has absorbed the characteristics of all three *Vedic* sun-gods: *Surya* himself, *Savitri* and *Vivasvat*.

⁶ Snail shell represents the power of creation and protection and symbolizes the four elements of life.

⁷ Wheels or discs symbolize the mind and a sign of the continuity of life (Zekrgoo, 1998: 75).

Surya is a dark red man with three eyes and four arms. Like the *Vedic Surya* he rides in a golden chariot drawn by seven horses, each one representing one day of the week (Ions, 1967: 80). *Surya* is worshiped in a temple known as the Sun Temples. *Surya* sits on a lotus flower over his golden chariot (Zekrgoo, 1998: 65).

Karttikeya

Karttikeya, or *Skanda*, is the chief battle god of the *Hindu* pantheon. As the battle god, he replaces *Indra* and *Agni*, his father. He is represented riding on *Paravani*, a peacock, and carrying a bow and arrow. He has six heads springing from one body and six pairs of arms and legs. He is called *Subrahmanya* in southern *India*. According to other versions, *Karttikeya* was the son of *Shiva*. Again he was born to combat *Asura* power (Ions, 1967: 86, 87).

Sarasvati

In the *Vedas*, *Sarasvati* was a water deity, goddess of a river of the same name which flowed west from the *Himalayas*, through the home of the early *Aryans*. In early times the

river and its goddess were celebrated for purifying, fertilizing and enriching powers, and for flowing clear into the sea. *Sarasvati* as goddess of poetry and music, standing on a lotus and accompanied by a swan, her vehicle. As *Brahma's* wife and the medium through which he executes his orders will, she is the patroness of all the creative arts (Ions, 1967: 89).

In *Indian* mythology, the goddess has the most similarity to *Anahita*. In *Rig Veda* *saravati* is best known as the best mother, as the best godfather, the goddess of fertility (Gaviri, 2006: 32).

Lakshmi

Lakshmi is the symbol of power, the monarchy and the wife of *Vishnu* and in the *Vedas* as the wife of *Varuna* or the Sun. Often, she is depicted as a golden and beautiful woman, sitting or standing on a lotus symbol. *Lakshmi* is depicted with four hands; in the two upper arms are two lilies. One of his lower arms is a sign of strength and fearlessness, and the other hand is a symbol of generosity (Zekrgoo, 1998: 84).

The Rain Angel in the *Boghe* of Gilan and the *Saghanefars* of Mazandaran

A number of *Boghe* in Gilan and *Saghanefars*⁸ in Mazandaran display representations that depict a human-headed creature with numerous upstretched hands. Apparently a female, the figure occasionally wears a crown, indicating that it is an angel. In many cultures, multiple upstretched hands represent a rain god or prayer for rain. In addition, the term “*malak-e baran*,” angel of rain, added by the painter, appears inscribed next to the representation. Such depictions are found at the *Saghanefars* of Ramnet, *Kebria Kola*, *Chamaz Kola*, *Kabud Kola* and *Shiyadeh* (in Babol County), at the *tekyehs*⁹ of *Valik Rudposht* (in Babolsar), *Shemreh Kola* (in Babol), *Moallem Kola* (in Amol), and at the

Boghe of Seyyed Reza Davarkia (in Lahijan)(Figures. 2-8).

The rain angel evokes the archetypal Tishtar of ancient beliefs. The rain god Tishtar is portrayed as the star *Sirius*, also known as the poets *Yemeni* or *Kalb Akbar*. The fourth month in the Iranian calendar, *Tir*, gets its name from Tishtar, and the *Tirgan* Fest would commemorate the rain (Curtis 1993, 21; Hinnells 1997, 36). The eighth *Yasht* invokes Tishtar (Tishtrya), portraying him as a bright and glorious star, whose nature is water, and who is the lord of all stars, and should be praised like Ahura Mazda, lest the Dave Apaosha, the drought demon, would overwhelm the Earth, and that if people praised him no enemies would menace the *Aryan* countries (*Yasht* 8). In mythology, the god occurs along with Mithra, Anahita, Vayu¹⁰

⁸ The term *saqhanefar*, originally *saqhanepar*, consists of *saqha* (water-fetcher) and *nepar*. “*Napa*” consists of “*napa*” and “*ar*.” “*Nap*,” an *Avestan* word with its root in the culture of the *Vedic* age, derives from the name of the god of waters, *Apam Panat*, of the *Rig Veda*. “*Nap*” or “*napat*” is the *Vedic* word for water and liquid, and “*ar*” is the abbreviated form of “*avarandeh*” (fetcher) (Hashempour, 2009, 26).

⁹ The term *Tekeyeh* in Iran is used for places of mass mourning of Shiites. It is used for any other place that is used for such purposes, whether in the middle of the city crossroads or a well-built building that can accommodate thousands of people. (Chelkowski, 1979:

97). During the Safavid, Zand and Qajar rule, this term is used for two different types of buildings, the monastery and the *Taziyeh* theater (Ibid: 100).

¹⁰ With the name literally meaning wind, he is a highly mysterious *Indo-Iranian* deity, who both bestows life, with the rain cloud, and death, with the storm (Hinnells 1997, 34). In *Iran*, he is a character of special significance, for who make sacrifices both the god (*Ahura Mazda*) and *Ahriman* (*Angra Mainyu*) (Hinnells, 1997, 34). In Islamic tradition, the wind is in charge of waters. God created the wind and gave it numerous wings, ordering him to carry the waters (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982: 997).

and Verethragna, and is associated with rain. He is the essence of all waters, and the fount of rain and fertility. The scriptures mention his incarnation as a glorious, bright star. *Tishtar Yasht* gives an account of his fight with the Dave Apaosha, who stopped the fall of rain

(Amouzgar, 1995: 24; Bahar, 1998: 553). *Tishtar* is associated by some with the angel *Michael* because he was regarded as the angel in charge of rain, fertility and mercy, thus serving the same roles played by *Michael* the angel of sustenance (Pour Davoud, 1995: 325).



Fig .2. The Rain Angel at the *Saghanefars* of Ramnet in Babol County



Fig. 3. The Rain Angel at the *Saghanefars* of Kebria Kola in Babol County



Fig. 4. The Rain Angel at the Tekyehs of Valik Rudposht in Babolsar

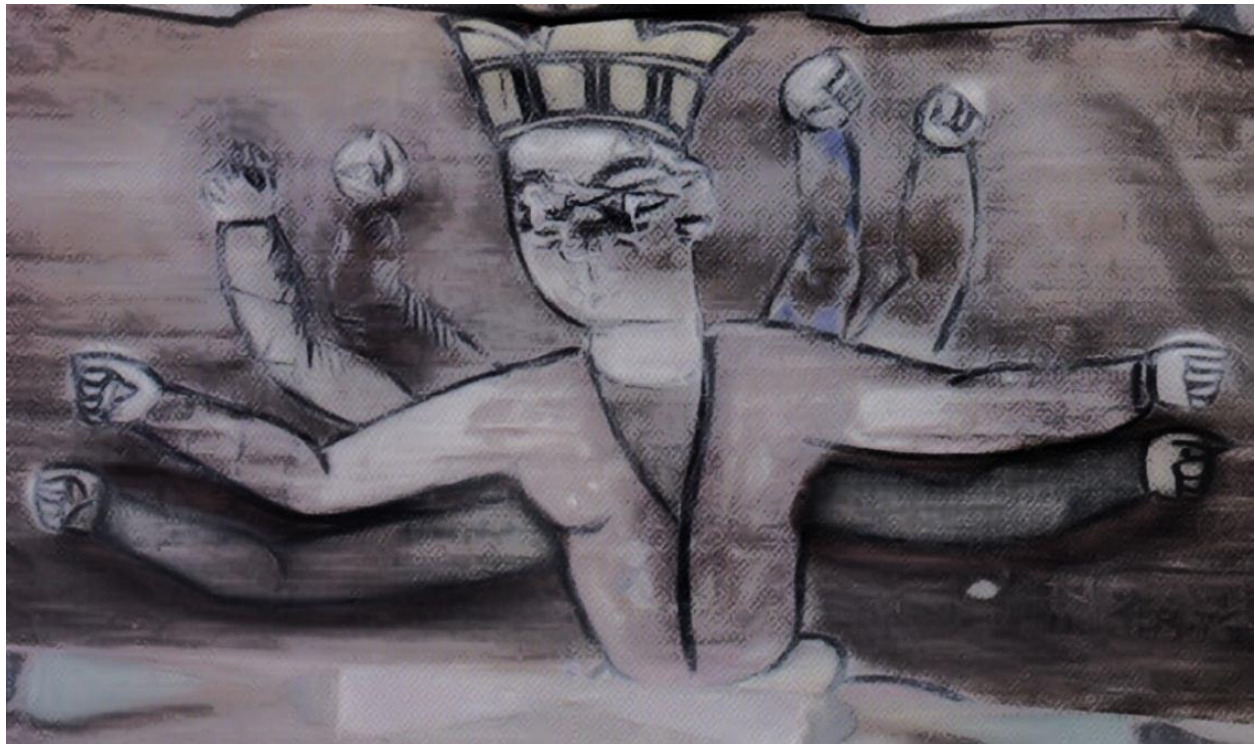


Fig. 5. The Rain Angel at the Saghanefars of Chamaz Kol in Babol County



Fig. 6. The Rain Angel at the Saghanefars of Kabud Kola in Babol County



Fig. 7. The Rain Angel at the Saghanefars of Shiyadeh in Babol County

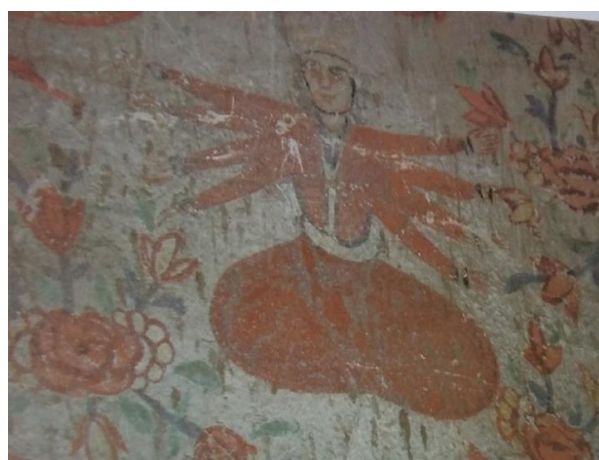


Fig. 8. The Rain Angel at the Boghe of Seyyed Reza Davarkia in Lahijan

In the Islamic mysticism, it is said that God sends down angels with every drop of rain, and according to *Hinduism* the tiny creatures descending from the moon are dissolved in raindrops, statements that all reflect fertility and revitalization (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982: 766). In Iranian belief system, water is the second material conception to be created by the god Hormuzd (Dadegi, 1990: 41). The water has two guardian angels namely Apam Napat and Anahita, with the latter being regard as the angel specific to water (al-Biruni, 1973: 303). Anahita encompasses such concepts as water, rain, abundance, *vegetation*, fertility, blessing, marriage, love, maternity, birth and victory (Barani and Khani, 2013: 13). *Anahita* is the source of the waters on earth, purifies all males' semen, and purifies all females' wombs and the milk in all mothers' breasts (Yahaghi, 2009: 814). In *Aban Yasht*, the deity is illustrated as a pretty, tall woman (Amouzgar, 1995: 21). Tishtar, who is the patron and guardian of Anahita, is associated with *Tir*, the first of the summer months. The season is coincided with the summer revolution and represents the warmest season

in most parts of Iran. The Tishtar star reaches its peak luminosity in *Tir*, and with more vigor than ever prepares itself for a tough battle with the Dave Apaosha. The preparation takes about a month, following which Tishtar in the guise of a beautiful white horse fights with the Dave Apaosha in the shape of a dark horse.

At the *Saghanefar* of Kebria Kola, Tishtar is portrayed as a white, winged horse, very similar to the descriptions outlined in historical sources (Figure.9). The white royal horse serves as a mount for heroes, saints, and spiritual elites during their Ascension. In the underworld, the horse is the lord or supporter of the three elements water, fire and earth, with moon as its star. In the upper world, it is associated with the three elements air, fire and water and its star is the sun (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982: 225). In many cultures, horses are privy to fertilizing waters secrets and know the underground paths of waters; from Europe to the Far East the bounty of gushing springs is attributed to horse hoof hits (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982: 228). In effect, there is a direct association between horse and water.



Fig. 9. Tishtar at the Saghanefer of Kebria Kola in Babol County

No sources mention the fall of rain in *Tir* (July). The first battle between Tishtar and Apaosha took place in *Mordad* (August). At first, Apaosha proved more powerful, but eventually in the late summer Tishtar, invigorated by sacrifices offered by Ahura Mazda, subdued Apaosha, liberating the waters (Barani and Khani, 2013: 19-20). In northern Iran, the star, *Tir*, rises at the dawn of

autumn and is the brightest one (Ismaeilpour, 2002: 93).

The counterparts of Tishtar and Apaosha in Indian mythology are *Indra*¹¹ and *Vritra*¹² (Barani and Khani 2013, 20). Astronomical analyses, such as those offered by Pour Davoud, which place the dawn of Tishtar or Orion's Hound in summer, in *Tir* (July) or *Mordad* (August) months (Pour Davoud, 1995: 331), are informed by *Egyptian*

¹¹ The dragon-killer deity, equivalent to the *Avestan Bahram* (Ismaeilpour 2002, 88)

¹² In *Vedic* mythology, he is holding the heavenly waters win the form of a dragon (Ismaeilpour 2002, 88)

astronomy. The star Tishtar would emerge in Dumuzi (*Tammuz*, equivalent of the *Egyptian Thoth* and *Iranian Tir*), and the Adonia (a fest dedicated to *Adonis/Tammuz*) was celebrated at about the same time (Ismaeilpour, 2002: 87). As stated earlier, the *Tirgan Fest*, annually held on *Tir* 13, is associated with Tishtar (Amouzgar, 1995: 26). However, in parts of Gilan, Mazandaran, Semnan and Damghan, the festivity, termed as *Tir Ma Sizeh Sho* in local parlance, is observed with distinct ceremonies on *Aban* 13 (equaling *Tir* 13 of the *Tabarian* calendar (November 4)). It has been suggested that the chronologically discrete celebration of *Tir Ma Sizeh Sho* in northern Iran, besides reflecting inspirations by the *Tabarian* calendar, indicates the arrival there of the rainy season and the commemoration of Tishtar, god of the rain (Esmaeilpour, 2002: 81). Furthermore, the human figure with multiple hands attested at *Saghanefars* and

Boghe appears to relate to a certain rain spell. The earliest known rain spell and prayer occurs in *Mojmal al-Tawarikh wa al-Qasas* (The Collection of Histories and Tales) (Mojmal al-Tawarikh, 1939: 98). The pottery collection from *Tell-e Bakun* (fourth and third millennia BC), includes a motif interpreted as “rain comb.” Other pertinent motifs are a goose-like bird which drops rain from its open wings, and a quartered moon with the rain comb on all its four sides. In addition to *Tell-e Bakun*, the distribution and continuing use of the rain comb motif on the pottery of the fourth millennium BC at *Susa* and the third millennium BC at *Tepe Sialk* attests to the fact that this symbolism was in vogue throughout the prehistoric *Iran*. It is always interpreted as a spell-like motif with a magical value connected to rainmaking rituals (Parham 1992, vol. 2: 339; Figure. 10).

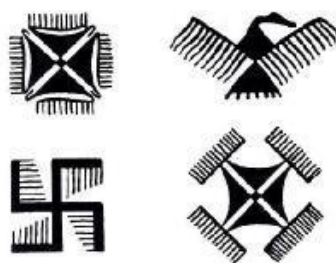


Fig. 10. Rain Comb on the Pottery Collection from Tell-e Bakun (Parham 1992, vol. 2: 339)

Rain is globally regarded as a symbol of the heavenly effects on earth and the fertilizer of earth. Hence, innumerable rituals were formed to ask for rain, among them being performances before the sun, invoking storm through knocking hammers on anvils, and various rain dances. In northern Iran, the rainmaking ceremony is associated with the performance of indigenous music and dance, using puppets. The puppets have their roots in the myth of *Anahita*. Related chants, accompanied by music, are recited in different languages and dialects in each region, and share an almost same content. The chants recount the drought-incurred sufferings and grieve of the personified fields, animals and the earth. God's forgiveness is sought, and He is invoked for fall of the rain (Zolfaghari, 2016: 92). The ceremonies are often accompanied by sacrifices and votive food preparation. In all these ceremonies, women have an active role. As though the woman and the rain are intertwined. In *India*, rain, meaning the font of all happiness and bliss, is a nickname that is given to a pregnant woman (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982: 765).

Discussion and Conclusion

There exist many deities with multiple hands in different cultures, especially in *India*. In some cases, multiple-handed gods did not evidently represent the god of rain or rainmaking. Yet, a number of them, briefly outlined below, are related to the subsistence, which is among the explicit concepts of the rain god.

Avalokitesvara or *Akvan-yin* of *Buddhism* has many hands in order to aid people and liberate them from suffering and anguish.

Shiva, the Hindu god of storm and lightning, is fertilizing and associated with the lord of beasts.

Brahma, the creator god in *Hinduism*, carries water jar in one hand.

Vishnu, a principle *Hindu* deity, plays many roles, including protector, preserver of life on earth, supreme Creator, and is also connected with the ocean of waters, and is sometimes referred to as a creature within the waters. *Vishnu* holds a shell, the symbol of the four elements of the life, and a lotus, which directly relates to water.

Shri or *Lakshmi* is another *Hindu* deity, the consort of *Vishnu*, is also associated with fertility, marriage and childbearing. *Lakshmi* is standing or sitting on her own symbol, i.e. lotus flower, and holds the same flower in both hands. She epitomizes power and royalty.

Surya, the deity worshiped in the sun temples, has a lotus among his accompanying attributes.

Karttikeya, the god of war, is sometimes identified with *Indra*, the god of storm and lightning.

A *Hindu* god closely related to *Anahita*, *Sarasvati* is the goddess of water and rivers, the goddess of nourishment, blessings and fertility. All the qualities attributed to *Anahita* can be said to also apply to this goddess. One of her most characteristic attributes is the lotus.

All of the deities mentioned above have multiple, generally four, hands. Hand signifies activity, but also power and dominance. In *Buddhism* and *Hinduism*, hand is the main symbolism involved in mudras, i.e. gestures or poses denoting the tenets. Each particular hand gesture conveys a different notion (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982: 600). The arm

symbolizes strength and power, benevolence, support, and the means of justice. Two arms represent the power to establish, inspire and act. *Brahma* is depicted with four arms and four arms to highlight the effect of his constant presence and absolute power. Open, outstretched arms mean supplication for divine mercy and opening the soul to God's grace and acceptance of the cosmic powers (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982: 146).

Another obvious sign associated with these deities is the lotus flower. In *Iranian*, *Indian* and *Egyptian* myths, the name and role of the lotus assume a particularly important place. The white and blue lotuses symbolize creation, fertility, birth, sex, and rebirth, and in ancient astronomy it characterized the sun and the sunrise. Furthermore, in *Iranian* myths the lotus flower is the place for keeping *Zoroaster's* sperm and a distinctive attribute of *Anahita*, guardian of the waters (Behrouzi, 1998: 641). In *Indian* mythology, the lotus is one of the major symbols of creation as well as a divine emblem. In *Hindu* belief system, *Brahman* or *Brahma* was born in the form of a lotus flower from *Vishnu's* navel. *Buddha* similarly came out from within a blue lotus at his birth (ibid:

644). Lotus is associated with water on the one hand and the sun and moon on the other. Water is both the birthplace and habitat of the lotus. Lotus opens with the sun and closes with the sunset (ibid). It symbolizes revitalization and fertility. In short, lotus is the link between death and life, and in particular a transition from one state to another (Bakker, 2007: 210). Lotus is part of the *Mithraic* symbolism. Lotus motif abounds in *Iranian* art. In the *Sassanid* rock-cut reliefs at *Taq-e Bostan*, the god *Mithra* is seen standing on a lotus flower. It is also a prominent motif in the *Achaemenid* period. The lotus flower can thus be regarded as an archetype that has been from antiquity up to the present in the minds of people with similar historical and cultural backgrounds, who used it in their arts and cultures in various ways, which are yet similar to a great extent.

The use of the representation of rain angel with multiple hands at the *Boghe* of Gilan, where the motifs largely deal with the Battle of *Karbala*, and at the *Saghanefars*, which are devoted to *Abbas ibn Ali (Hazrat-e Abul Fazl)*, the *Saqqa* (water-fetcher) of the *Karbala* Plain, was a very clever idea. A major problem faced by *Imam Hussein's* companions in *Karbala*

was the lack of water: his companions became martyrs while having excessive thirst, and *Hazrat-e Abul Fazl* was martyred as he was trying to fetch water to them. The theme has had various manifestations in the Islamic Iran's culture and art. In the ritualistic buildings under discussion, the artist yearns for the fall of rain for *Imam Hussein's* companions in the *Karbala* Plain by employing the representation, which here serves rather as a sort of rain prayer or spell. Another relevant issue in justifying the application of rain angel in these sanctuaries is: since Gilan and Mazandaran rank among the Iranian regions with highest rainfall and water shortage there, both in the past and future, would appear utterly improbable, why should there ever be a need for depicting a rain angel in the local religious monuments or the rite of rainmaking? The answer for this question lies in the historical sources, wherein one finds records of occasional severe droughts, lasting for several months, in these two provinces, most notably in the reigns of the *Qajar* kings *Mozaffar ad-Din Shah* and *Nasir ad-Din Shah*. Since the local subsistence relied on agriculture and livestock farming, the ensuing

widespread damage steered people towards *Boghe* and *Saghanefars*, praying for rain and offering vows and sacrifices. It was probably during such incidents that local artists were commissioned to portray the depictions on the walls and ceilings of the buildings. The rain god is guardian of the rain and the angel in charge of the subsistence, and under his

auspices, the earth is cleaned and provided with timely rains. After all, water and rainfall are the most vital elements for an agricultural life. Thus, by drawing the depictions in these sanctuaries, the artist communicates in a symbolic manner his own and his Orders' aspiration, the abolishment of the drought demon and plea for the fall of rain.

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خدای باران (تیشتر)؛ نمونه موردی بقعه‌های گیلان و سقائفارهای مازندران

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چکیده: شخصیت‌های اسطوره‌ای با عنوان خدا یا فرشته با دستان متعدد در فرهنگ‌های مختلف به چشم می‌خورد. در تعدادی از بقعه‌های گیلان و سقائفارهای مازندران نقش انسان‌گونه‌ای با دست‌های زیاد رو به بالا تصویر شده که بنا بر کتیبه آن، فرشته یا ملک باران معرفی شده است. در اساطیر ایرانی آن‌ها پتیا فرشته مخصوص آب ذکر شده و تیشتر فرشته باران است. هدف از این تحقیق بررسی کارکرد شخصیت‌ها و نقشمایه‌های انسان‌گونه چند دست نزد ایرانیان، هندوها و بوداهاست. در تمامی این فرهنگ‌ها، دست‌های متعدد نشانگر یاری و کمک‌رسانی و دست‌های رو به بالا به معنی استغاثه برای رحمت الهی است.

واژه‌های کلیدی: بقعه‌های گیلان، سقائفارهای مازندران، فرشته باران، هندوئیسم، بودا، کربلا.



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