

A Fabulous Narrative of a Semi-Anonymous Myth of Pre-Historic Era in the Iranian Plateau

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Abstract

An amalgamation of ancient mythological and linguistic features from Ghabrestan Tepe, this article is disposed to introduce some of the oldest findings especially about the then prevailing myths. It can possibly be said that the oldest motifs carved by men, on bones, stones or on cave walls have been the depictions of myths related to Homo sapiens; however, even after the lapse of thousands of years, it is still impossible to find the main tenets they actually tried to narrate through those depictions. Unfortunately, we have to admit that, even the use of modern methods, doesn't help us to reach to those stories that are much warped and deformed. This article, tries to carry, what has remained from some later version of the myths, backwards in time and, by focusing on a pottery design, uncover what once has been a mythological and significant narrative. Perhaps this had been a well-known mythological story narrated in religious and domestic circles.

Keywords: Myth, Gilgamesh and Ishtar, Ghabrestan Tepe, Iranian Plateau.

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Introduction

Undoubtedly, the ultimate goal of the archeology is to conceive what the ancient men perceived in their mind and conveyed it through their action. Although traditional archaeologists and to some extent their modernist colleagues, in the case of illustrating some relationships between material and mind, are subject to non-philosophical skepticism, it seems that both groups have always used archaeological materials in general and pottery design in particular to reach such an ultimate goal.

It is hardly possible to portrait prehistoric people without some ability which enabled them to communicate with objects they imagined, thought of, and reflected upon. In the case of this 'communication', one can dare to say that language and narration must have been one of the primary ways. Lingual narration, because of some different reasons, including the absence of narrators, and the time limit of communication through language is doomed to live in a short span of time. On the other hand, communication action, also, not to regard whether its usage has been prior to lingual communication or not, has been subject to the same limits, and although it can be considered a more effective way, nevertheless is a subject of time. In the case of those periods, it is not possible to consider lingual narration without action or performance. However, theoretically speaking, one can distinguish each. The other

point that must be mentioned is the doubt that whether the performance has been more effective than narration—the subject that could not be studied separately.

Before the translation of voices into the shapes, they were illustrated and conveyed through materials such as clay, papyrus or skin and paper, and consequently the elimination of its limits, in the time of the advent of literature (not the advent of writing in Uruk period); or even before the modern communication revolution in which vocal and visual electronic medias were universally used, the best media that could eliminate the mentioned limits of time was painting through which man could illustrate his thoughts. Initially, painting included carving on the wall of caves, bones and wood but after the advent of the first real creation like pottery and pottery design, besides its role of embellishment which quenched the thirst of man for variety, seemingly, at least, since the time we call Chalcolithic period, in the case of communication of the concepts, its usage was also current.

Chronology of Ghabrestan Tepe

The most recent chronology proposed for Ghabrestan tepe is by Fazeli (2006). He indicates: "Ghabrestan, temporally speaking, includes three important Chalcolithic phases; the early, the middle, and the later. The early phase began at 4200 BC and continued till

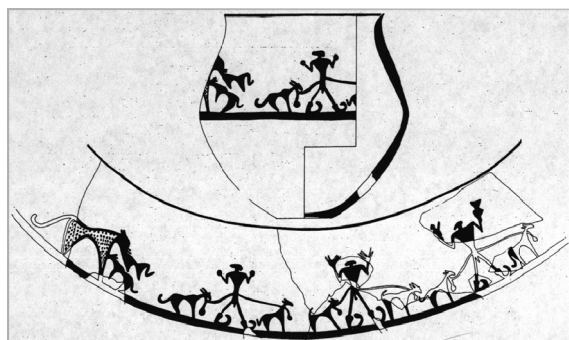


Figure 1. Pottery of Ghabrestan (After: Majidzadeh: 1981).

ca. 4000 BC and was contemporary to Sialk III3, except Sialk III1-2. The second phase also called Ghabrestan II began from 4000 BC and continued till 3700 BC. The third and the last settlement phase started at 3700 BC. Yet, the end of the occupation in Ghabrestan is a relative matter and the specification of the time in which it was abandoned necessitates further researches (Ibid: 85; Majidzadeh, 1976).

Materials and Methods

During the excavations at Ghabrestan in 1973-74, from its Stratum IV, a broken and relatively big potsherd was unearthed and described as “of high significance” (Majidzadeh 1981: 61; Figure 1).

Describing it an “oldest pictorial expression”, in an article Majidzadeh explains:

“A man with his feet apart from each other that implies some motion. He has held his hands high. Because of his phallus which is obviously shown, concerning his gender, there is no doubt about his masculinity. Although the upper part

of his body has a triangular shape and his hands are depicted from the front, nevertheless head and feet are shown in profile and their motion is towards right, and it should be mentioned that this style is common among the artists of western Asia and ancient Middle East. This man has worn an interesting pair of foot-cloths the tip of which completely upward and is much similar to the shoes of the modern clowns. It is very likely that the depiction of the curve of their tips is highly exaggerated. [...]. The highest angle of his triangular upper part of body is downwards and his hands are like two (V)s attached to the sides of his body. This man appears three times in a horizontal row. Once he has folded his finger into fists, the second time he has unfolded his fingers and has kept his fingers apart like the tail of a peacock and finally in his third depiction he has held a piped vessel in his right hand and a chalice in the other. The depiction of his phallus shows that he is naked. In his each side there is one animal (most possibly dogs) each of which, as he himself, is moving towards right. In each side there is a rope with its one end attached to the necks of the dogs and the other to the man's waist and there are things possibly urceolates hung from their necks. A leopard with its black head and a big body is chasing this naked man and his dogs, and two other animals have invaded it and have embedded their teeth in its thigh and jaw. It is highly possible these two animals are the repeated depiction of the same dogs enslaved by the naked man. On the surface one can infer that the naked man is attacked by a leopard and has loosed his dogs to

fight with it. Nevertheless, if this description be true, is just a hint to the subject of the story and not the all of it.[...]. For the time being, it is not possible to comment more on the above scene, since, not only the depiction of such a scene on pottery has been unprecedented in whole the Middle east, but also its likeness has not been noticed in any other kinds of art such as carving, making seals, and painting”. (Ibid: 62)

After this painstaking description, the excavator of Ghabrestan, has studied some samples of ancient features (mostly the designs of Mesopotamian seals) that “their style and the use of common artistic conventions of ancient Middle East in” (Ibid) them; has contributed to the conception we have of this case and then, as an implicit conclusion, assumes this man to be the same that “among archaeologists is renowned as the Sultan of the Beasts” (Ibid). Concerning mythological texts of Mesopotamia, one can possibly say that the most important state in which a man can dominate an animal is in some part of the Epic of Gilgamesh in which Enkidu; who in his own turn has previously been a savage or a semi-animal, brings about the death of the ‘Bull of Heaven’; the symbol of the power of the animals. As a result, it is possible to argue that what we know as archaeological Sultan of the Beasts is the same Enkidu.

“Myth is the true history that has taken place in the beginning of the time...” (Eliade 2002: 24). We are far from this holy time of the beginning... (in illo tempore)..., or at least from

the holy time of retelling of these events; that are unable to find out the meanings hidden in them.

In this scant space, not only there is no place to dedicate to the variegated definitions of the myth, but also there is no need to do so. Any definition that one assumes for the myth cannot be out of the scope in which an important myth like the Epic of Gilgamesh can be found.

Nowadays, the epic of a person the two-third parts of whom is God and the rest is mankind and mortal (see Kramer, 2004: 162), are known through several tablets which archaeologists discovered in Mesopotamia. Perhaps most of us have read this myth for several times and might have added the fact that it is ‘the oldest’ to enjoy, nevertheless, all of us, either unconsciously or consciously have known that this narrative is not written by a specific person or in a specific time as the beginning of the third millennium B.C; however, the novelists of our time have made our conscious and to some extent unconscious mind get used to their writings.

Perhaps, a revision of a part of the epic of Gilgamesh could help us find some more points. In the tablets, in which the story has come to this point that Ishtar appears before Gilgamesh and to some extent is renowned as the tablets of Bull of heaven, we read:

... After Ishtar [the Babylonian name of Sumerian Inanna] tells Gilgamesh: “... come and be my love” (Guirand et al. 2003: 103); Gilgamesh who, after contemplation on the

meaning of Death, is no longer the same lecherous person, insultingly refuses the request of Goddess and says:

"Come near so that I unveil your prostitution!
Since you have mourned for your youth's lover:
Dummuzi

... For many years.

You loved that Allalu bird

That little gardener

But you broke his wings!

Once you were in love with the lion, that powerful and Authoritative Beast

But you dug out fourteen pits for him

You fell in love with that speedy horse, proud in Battle.

But you saddled and splashed him with wood-stick and scourge.

You fell in love with the shepherd

He+ sacrificed his yearlings for you, everyday

But you tabbed him and turned him into a leopard...

Now you love me too, but like them I will be metamorphosed."⁵ (Ibid 104)

5. See the more elaborated version of the story (in comparison Guirand's abridged version): "On Tammuz, the spouse of thy youth, Thou didst lay affliction every year. Thou didst love the brilliant Allalu bird But thou didst smite him and break his wing; He stands in the woods and cries "O my wing".[paragraph continues] He likewise charged her with deceiving the lion and the horse, making reference to obscure myths: Thou didst also love a shepherd of the flock, Who continually poured out for thee the libation, And daily slaughtered kids for thee; But thou didst smite him and didst change him into a leopard, So that his own sheep boy hunted him, And his own hounds tore him to pieces." (Mackenzie 2009)

Ishtar, as a goddess, feeling affronted by the insulting refusal of this semi-god, sends the Bull of Heaven to fight him. In this battle the real victor is Enkido (Sultan of the Beasts), but Enkidu rushed to help him, grasped the tail of the Bull, and tore him into pieces (Ibid).

Now we come back to the pottery design of Ghabrestan where we have, which might be also named as: the oldest visual expression of a Myth⁶. However, surely one will protest what this picture has to do with the Epic of Gilgamesh!?

This picture is not the visual expression of the epic related to Gilgamesh himself or some part of his myth. In this picture, we are dealing with the myth or the epic which is briefly hinted to; that is; the short excerpt of the part of the text in which Gilgamesh insultingly answers the famous and lusty goddess:

Thou didst also love a shepherd of the flock who continually poured out for thee the libation, and daily slaughtered kids for thee; but thou didst smite him and didst change him into a leopard, So that his own sheep boy hunted him ...

The story of this shepherd has not so far been noticed in any of the tablets discovered in Mesopotamia. However, we know that Ishtar or the Babylonian Inanna has once been in love with a shepherd. This shepherd has been found

6. In comparison to Majidzadeh's remark; "the oldest visual expression".

by Majidzadeh in Ghabrestan, but so far, this archeologist is unable to reconnect the severed relation of thousand years between these two heroes. Despite the fact that the later excavator of Ghabrestan (Fazeli Nashli), as mentioned, paid attention to this picture but never noticed its mythological qualities and potentialities, and simply considers it a depiction of hunting (Fazeli Nashli, 2006: 87).

On the other hand, such picture could be considered as the kind of narration found in comic strip (of course here we have no additional writings explaining the picture). Moreover the Plateauian⁷ painter, unlike what is common in comic strip as we know it today, has not separated every single part of the story in a frame. Before continuing our discussion on pottery, it is necessary to mention yet another point:

King writes: "... a Grecian Legend that possibly has been of some Babylonian root, is about Actaeon that has been apparently similar to the shepherd in whom Ishtar has been interested and have been turned into a leopard by her and has been invaded and killed by the hounds of the shepherd himself" (King, 2007: 280).

The translator of this text (Behzadi), afterword (Ibid: 389) pointed to some alteration in the Grecian version of this Myth in comparison to the Mesopotamian one. Since what we read in this part of the conversation between Ishtar and Gilgamesh is not available as a separate myth and only it is from this 'copy of copy' that we can approach the original myth, for the sake of at least this one reason, we are obliged to mention the Grecian narration of the myth that in its own turn sheds more light on a more complete version:

"Actaeon, son of Aristée and Autonoée, was from Thebes. By the sensible recommendation of centaure, he became one of the most dexterous hunters of his land; however, his complacency brought an ominous fate to him. In fact, he was bragging of being more skilled in hunting than Artémis⁸. One day, while pursuing a game, he accidentally saw Artemis bathing⁹ in Cithaeron Mountains. The Goddess of hunting, already furious because of the Actaeon's insolence... [his boast of being superior in hunting]... did not forgive his fault... [watching the naked Goddess]... and having turned him into a deer, commanded the fifty Hounds which were present ... [possibly

7. Ghabrestan tepe is located in an area that in the literature of archaeology of Iran is called the Iranian Central Plateau. In this article the word '*Plateauian*' (as pronounced in Farsi: /falaati/) means: related to the culture or the people of the Central Plateau of Iran.

8. [Cynthia, Dian (In roman Mythology), daughter of Zeus and Leto; one of whose divine responsibilities is Hunting Goddess]

9. [There is an indirect similarity that seemingly and at the first glance sounds to be a contradiction, between Artemis's bathing which Actaeon watches and Gilgamesh's Bathing which is watched by Ishtar.]...

those of Actaeon himself]..., to tear him into pieces” (Schmidt 2004: 30).

The alterations of this text, seems to be obvious: regarding their culture and civilization, it is impossible to compare the Iron Age of Greek with Mesopotamian Bronze Age and its pre-literature era. However, the interesting point is, in the one hand the numerous similarities between this Grecian narration of the myth and its Mesopotamian original one, and on the other the various similarities between the latter and its illustrated Plateauian sample. As a result, one can expect that the Greek representation of this myth is tinged also with the same Plateauian air - that at the time of the creation of the Grecian version has been something near thousands of years old. Nevertheless, there is a difference that in the Grecian version the goddess has an active role, but in the Plateauian version the lusty goddess of that time, whose name is not known, is hidden to the eye of the beholder of the painting (Figures 2 and 3). Two points should be mentioned: first, we do not know whether or not there is some ‘lusty goddess’ behind this Plateauian version of the myth. To address this issue one can say that the undeniable similarities between the Plateauian version and the epics of Gilgamesh and Actaeon, does not allow one to doubt about the fact that here the negative role is also played by an unknown goddess. Secondly; the question that whether,



Figures 2 and 3. The Goddess Artemis commands the hounds to tear Actaeon into pieces. Behind the hand of the poor Actaeon which is held upward the head of the animal which is going to be shaped is discernible. Artemis is resolute and truculent. A part of the Zoophorus of Celinonet, museum of Palermo, (the image and explanations after Schmidt 2004).

at that time, the Plateauians believed in Ishtar (called by any name) or not, could be answered by further studies in this matter.

It seems to be rational to ask this question; (In each region, into what kind of animal, the

Goddess have turned its beloved?). This question is not created out of the difference of the leopard (into which the shepherd; the beloved of Ishtar is turned) and the deer (into which Actaeon is turned), because the temporal and spatial distance between the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Actaeon Myth makes these differences of this sort seem to be too rational to look for their reasons. The more important issue hidden in this question is the same thing which most possibly has hindered Majidzadeh, who has translated and cited the epic of Gilgamesh in his most massive writing (Majidzadeh, 2000: 337), from noticing the similarity between this epic and his finding. Let us have a look at his citation of this part of the Epic of Gilgamesh that is the representative of the wide spectrum of its translations:

“then you made love with a shepherd
Who incessantly encumbered you with the
dung ... and daily sacrificed for you his
yeanelings but you crushed and changed him
into a wolf, So that his sheep-boys scare him
away ---- and his hounds bite at his tights. ...”
(Majidzadeh, 2000: 337).

Most of the translations of this myth have introduced ‘wolf’ as the animal into which the shepherd is turned. For example:

You also loved the shepherd with his herd ...
he piled ash cakes high for you without cease
....and on this burning charcoal daily offered
you his young and succulent kids ...but you

struck himAnd turned him into a **wolf**
So that now his own herd boys drive him
off.....And his own dogs bite at his thighs (after
Temple 1991).

That has also many likenesses in the other translations of the eighth tablet of the epic of Gilgamesh. However we should know in the eighth tablet and this stanza of the myth what word has been picked and how it must be translated:

50 R ii 8 [-d]a-ni «fla-rid
ak-kan-nu ·á KUR-i» **nim-ru** ·á EDIN V2 ii 1
[]
E 30-1 ib-ri ku-dan-nu flar-du a-[] /
nam-mar ·á EDIN
(after George 2009)

Or ...

50 R ii 8 [-d]a-ni «fla-rid ak-
kan-nu ·á KUR-i» **nim-ru** ·á **EDI**
(after George 2008)

The sounds (**nam-mar**) and (**nim-ru**) that are somehow the same, are in fact two words, that stand for a kind of animal of the cat family (**felidae**), namely ‘leopard’¹⁰ or some

10. Panther or Leopard. As an evidence sallum writes: “‘NMR’: ‘Namero’, (leopard) in Acadian tongue has been appeared as ‘Némro’ and in Ethiopian language has been recorded as (Namar) (taken from Acadians)....” (Sallum 222)... and:

"Akkadian: *nimru* (*nammar*) 'panther' Oakk. on [CAD n2 234], [AHw. 790]. Reliably attested in the OB Diri (PIRIG.TUR = *ni-im-ru-um*, OECT IV 153 IV 5). The Oakk. attestation in MDP 10 p. 57 No. 74:3 is not unproblematic ("S'agirait-il d'une image de Nergal,

translations 'tiger'. Here, it is not important to discuss why in some of the translations of this myth the shepherd has turned into a wolf; however it is not useless to mention these reasons: first, in any given text of the pre-historic period, reviewers in a very common method, have altered, added and omitted the sentences, names or the meanings. It is not impossible, that in some of the original texts of this epic carved on the tablets, be a word that is translatable into the word 'wolf', or that basically there is no consensus among the linguists in the case of the meaning of the ostensible shape of this word. Second, it is possible to infer that in any given time and region, in the context of the pastoral culture, a specific species of animal, including cat or dog families (falidae /canidae), has been considered

"panthe°re" ou "le°opard" a° laquelle on sacrifiait...?" according to the editor). More details on *n.* see in [Landsberger Fauna 77], [Salonen Jagd 226-8]. The by-form *nam-mar* has been known from Gilg. VIII II 8, SEE JCS 8 93 (as a variant of *nim-ru*) but now probably also in the OA incantation ... published in [Michel 59] (*ezzat pul?at ilat nammarat barbaratum mfrat Anim* 'she is fierce, she is awe(inspi- ring), she is a goddess, she is a panther, the she-wolf, the daughter of Anum'). This interpretation (suggested by Ms. E.Vorob'yova) seems preferable to that proposed by the editor since the derivation of *na-ma-ra-at* from *namurratu* 'bright, shining' seems most unlikely" (Militarev)

In recent text to show an instance of the use of this word, the excerpt of the Epic of Gilgamesh which is of high interest to this article is also hinted at.

to be an enemy. In the deserts located in the Semnan province (north-central of Iran, one of provinces that includes central Iranian plateau) where the nomads winter, while in the most of the Iranian folklores, as is the case among most of the nations, wolf is the prime enemy of the herds, the most causalities is due to the invasions of cheetahs.

Another point that can help us to find the reason of this difference is hidden in the limits of illustration. At least, for Chalcolithic painter of the Iranian central plateau, who has been obliged to use some restricted range of colors and in this area the paintings of this culture are usually monochromic, it must have seemed too difficult to depict the difference between dog and wolf both of which belong to the same species of animals and are nominally brothers, and likewise to show the difference between the shepherd who has turned into a wolf and his hounds which have attacked him, and it seems that he desired not this discrimination be possible only to those for whom this myth has been of metaphysical necessity and have understood it well. In other words the painter has possibly been disposed to make use of this image to propagate his culture's metaphysics.

Conclusion

This research and basically the discovering of this pottery design – that is presently possible to call it “the oldest complete visual expression of

a myth” adds no significance to ‘quotation’ and lingual narration of the Epic of Gilgamesh. However, it is worth mentioning that nowadays a myth is no longer considered to be a narrative. As Poirier indicates:

“A myth can be something other than a tale or a narration; its configuration through words and language is just one of its possible shapes. Is it possible to call the painting of Lascaux, some of the sculptures and carving of the churches’ porches and a many other pictures, myths? Surely yes ... because all of these pictures are the symbolic and truthful expression of some society that is the substance of the myth. Therefore, myth can be expressed through any language, even if it is a mute one, not being consisted of sounds” (Bastide, 1991: 45).

From the point of view of lingual mythology, what we know now is the same of what we have known before reading this article, however, from the stance of mythology application there are few differences:

1. In ‘myth-archaeology’, besides the fact that this picture is the reference to one part of the oldest known myth¹¹, is in itself, if we do not call it the oldest, one of the oldest myths that has remained for us and we have come upon a satisfying reason that, at least, the people of Central Iranian Plateau in Chalcolithic period

11. Images; as old as paintings of the prehistoric caves, can in some instances narrate the myths that have been in the human mind from the Paleolithic period, but we have not access to the layers of their narratives and thoughts.

have had a metaphysical thought in which one can notice a complicated part as myth that in its own turn shows that this thought is deeply rooted in the culture of their region.

2. From another viewpoint, the visual expression of this myth is so shaped that it seems to be more ‘avant-garde’ than the earlier samples found in Greek Iron Age and Mesopotamia of Bronze Age:

In the story of the Plateauian Tabulu (the Mesopotamian name of this shepherd), although he himself in his three roles, is walking from left to right, nevertheless whole of this ‘comic strip’, has a motion in the reverse direction, and as mentioned above, has to be read from right to left.

Let us, after five-six thousands of years, have a look at the version of the myth designed as a modern comic strip, and then read its modern interpretation and updated narration into which some lines are interpolated for elaboration (Figure 4).

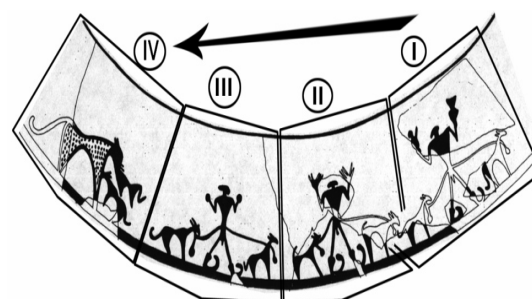


Figure 4

3. Plateauian Tabulu is a shepherd who has been the 'lover-beloved' of Ishtar and (every day¹²) brought to her some presents and offerings. [In this image we can see the (possibly) dog (that in the conception of the intelligent and active mind of its painter, shows the man to be a shepherd). Moreover, the yeanling¹³; the sacrifice which is fastened to his waist; 'a piped vase and a chalice' are also carried to his beloved (Sacrifice and gift)].

4. Between these two lovers, for a while, everything is deranged. [In contrast with the Mesopotamian Epic (in which the evanescent lechery of Ishtar is to blame for the problems) and different from the Grecian myth (In which the Actaeon's pride is the cause); in this plateauian myth] the cause of the derangement of their relationship is Tabulu's negligence [this can be inferred from the fingers that are apparently apart from each other which insists upon showing his hands empty of the promised sacrifices and the gifts. In other words it is tabulu that by ignoring to offer the usual gifts; has betrayed their relationship, or has

responded to Ishtar's possible dissatisfaction (the cause of which is not depicted within this picture) with him. The fact that we see him with the yeanling¹⁴ fastened to his waist, can only show that he is a shepherd, and cannot be the reason that he is carrying his gifts].

5. One day that he has been angrily [the anger that can be known from his fists] with his dogs [in this scene it has not been necessary to focus on his being a shepherd (by showing the yeanling) and the presence of the two dogs fastened to his waist, is necessary to keep the sequence and harmony of this scene with the next one!]; ...

6. ...He is impacted by Ishtar's wrath [here in contrast with the Grecian myth; we cannot find any supplementary cause for the anger of the Goddess] and Ishtar the great [that because of her high status and dignity, and perhaps the visual taboo of (the Godheads)¹⁵ in plateau; is

12. This (every day) is inferred from the Babylonian version.

13. Majidzadeh, in his description of this image (see above) has not mentioned any goat or yeanling and has introduced all the animals fastened to the shepherd's waist as dogs. The reason that the writer believes some of these animals to be goats, is the upward tail of some of them in contrast with some others the tails of which are downward and longer and can show that they are (dogs).

14. The tails of the animals fastened to his waist, this time, is upward and short, that are obviously different from the tails of his dogs that are longer and more downcast.

15. The human cases are not completely sanctified, and as a result could be represented. These cases are either worshipers that are going to their worshiped Gods (for example; a man with his sacrifice); or are the people who attend some spiritual rites (the group of dancers depicted upon the potteries), or because of their attribution to metaphysics are turned into semi-gods:

1) Through their relation to the Godheads, for example this image

2) Because of their deaths and going to the afterworld and also because of the worship of the spirits of the ancestors.

not represented in this image] She turns him into a 'leopard'¹⁶ that is hunted by the Dogs fastened to his waist¹⁷.

16. The fact that in this part of the image the leopard's head is painted in black, and Majidzadeh has emphasized on it, can be the same tradition of 'silhouette painting' of the bodies of the creatures in this place and era (that to some extent is not confined to this era). The body of the leopard, because of the emphasis which has to be put on the specs on its skin as its distinguishing quality, is treated as an exception. Another thing that can be the reason of the Leopard's head being painted in black, is the same reason out of which the pictures are basically painted in silhouette method. We know that for most of the cultures of the primitive man, the most important part of the body is the head (for example see Frazer 2005: 260). If we consider this holiness of the head along with the fact that the leopard – albeit not holly in itself- is 'the Metamorphosed' of a man semi-holly, and carries consequently and contiguously the same reverence, that although out of the same reason mentioned above the painter could not paint its/his body in silhouette he had to paint his/its head, as the most important part of his/its body, in this style.

17. Majidzadeh in his description and based on his suppositions, although cleverly hints to some point in which the repletion of the picture of the man is regarded and besides this, has implicitly hinted to the 'right to left' motion of the elements of this picture; nevertheless has supposed that the image of the man is repeated three times. However, regarding the explanations given in this article, the number of the repetitions must be four, in the first three times of which Tabulu is a human beloved and in the fourth time is turned into a leopard, and it should also be considered that the painter and his contemporaneous viewers of this picture has not doubted about 'its' being a man. The fact that after being metamorphosed into an animal we are still disposed to

It is curious that, even today, regarding the cultural level of the modern man and the restrictions of the surface of potteries as a place for the emanation of artistic activities, it is impossible to find instances such as the discussed image that have managed to express a story through such elaborated pictures. Is it possible to expect something more from the visual expression of a story?

7. Concerning the age of this pottery, that is at least one or two thousand years older than the other versions that are trying to convey the Epic of Gilgamesh, whether through visual or lingual expression, is it not possible to consider the wellspring of this myth to be the Chalcolithic Iran, specially the central plateau? Is, the fact that within the present borderlines of Iran, the instances of the Epic of Gilgamesh is not as much as those found in Mesopotamia, a satisfying reason for the penetration of the myth from Mesopotamia into Iran?!

8. If Gilgamesh is a historical figure and a king of the first dynasty and the founder of the militaristic city of Uruk, (For example see Geers, D., & Cerar, M:2009 and Robinson:2009) and if this myth belongs to some time before him and

consider it as a man, seems to be a natural, and can likewise be traced in the images of Actaeon and Artemis provided in this article, in which the text is apparently narrating the metamorphosis of Actaeon into a 'deer' and then being torn into pieces by the hounds; both of the artists in their depictions have shown him as a man.

has later been attributed to him; one of the possibilities, is the penetration of this myth from Iran into Mesopotamia in which it has developed at least in its written form.

9. One thing that can be mentioned about the combined myths such as the Epic of Gilgamesh is their 'gradual evolution'. An example can help us to have a better understanding of the matter: a father addresses his son saying: "I will no longer buy you a car, because you crashed down that van, made that Peugeot fall into the valley, and because of your carelessness your last car was stolen." In this narration, in actual fact, we are dealing with three other stories; the story of the three cars that this son has not careful in their maintenance. Now the point is the fact that the stories of each one of those lost cars has taken place in some time and place prior to the time and place in which the narration itself is happening. Here we are confronted with some kind of evolution of narration in which the past events of some anecdotes are used in the present narration.

This is also the case in the Epic of Gilgamesh and especially in Gilgamesh's insulting answer to Ishtar, in which we are reminded of three or four events that have befallen previously. Therefore, in this part of the Epic the principle of the 'gradual evolution' of the narration is met. Now to consider that a number of nations have participated in this evolution, is not a purely subjective judgment!

In other words, it is possible that each part of this Epic have its roots among the archetypal memories of different nations.

One can consider that the Mesopotamian narrators of the Epic of Gilgamesh have exercised a kind of literary 'collage' and have decorated each part of this genuine long epic by some more marginal myths all of which are not necessarily taken from their own national sources of mythology and it is possible to, for instance, say that; this specific part of the Epic which has been the main concern of this article, has been an adaptation of the myths belonging to the Central Plateau of Iran in the earlier periods such as Chalcolithic period. Although the tracing of this issue needs to be studied more, nevertheless, 'Leopard' can be considered as a useful clue that has been more likely to be found in the Central Plateau of Iran than in Mesopotamia and has been manifested in this Epic. The motif of leopard is numerous on the potteries of the Central Plateau of Iran, the fact that is in contrast with the scarcity of this motif in the Mesopotamian Potteries.

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روایتی شگفت‌انگیز از یک اسطوره نیمه‌ناشناس از دوره پیش از نگارش فلات ایران

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این مقاله می‌کوشد تا با تلفیق زبان‌شناسی اسطوره‌ای با قطعه سفالی خاص به دست آمده از تپه قبرستان به معرفی یکی از قدیمی‌ترین شواهد روایت یک اسطوره بپردازد. شاید پر بیراه نباشد که عنوان نمود که قدیمی‌ترین حکاکی‌ها بر روی استخوانها، سنگها و دیواره‌های غارهای پیش از تاریخ خود به نوعی متأثر از بیان اسطوره‌های انسان هوشمند بوده‌اند، هرچند با گذشت هزاره‌ها تقریباً روایت داستان در پس این نقوش تقریباً غیرممکن می‌نماید. متأسفانه ناگزیر از اعتراف به این مهم هستیم که با روش‌شناسی‌های امروزی نمی‌توان به روایت اصلی نهفته شده در پشت این نقوش پی برد. این نوشتار می‌کوشد تا با استفاده از مفاهیم اسطوره‌شناسی و با به عقب بردن مفاهیم آن در بُعد زمان به روایت صحیحی از آنچه در مرور زمان مدفون گردیده دست یابد. شاید این روایت اسطوره‌ای یکی از شناخته شده‌ترین‌ها در اعصار گذشته بوده که در مراسم مذهبی و آئینی مورد استفاده قرار می‌گرفته است.

واژگان کلیدی: اسطوره‌های گیل‌گمش و ایشтар، تپه قبرستان، فرهنگ فلاتی.

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