RESEARCH ARTICLE

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

Solmaz Raof1ID, Javad Neyestani2ID, Seyed Mehdi Mousavi Koohpar3ID

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: Boghe of Gilan, Saghanefar 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 Yasht. 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 and Harappa, the Indus Valley civilization, 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, Saghanevar 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' 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 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).

---

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, yogenic 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

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 Saghanevars of Mazandaran

A number of Boghe in Gilan and Saghanevars\(^8\) 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 Saghanevars of Ramnet, Kebria Kola, Chamaz Kola, Kabud Kola and Shiyadeh (in Babol County), at the tekye\(^9\) of Valik Rudposht (in Babolsar), Shemreh Kola (in Babol), Moallem Kola (in Amol), and at the Boghe of Seyyed Reza Davarkia (in Lahljan) (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 Apaoshka, 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, Vayu\(^10\)

---

8 The term saghanefar, originally saghanepar, 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 Tekyeh 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](image2)

![Fig. 3. The Rain Angel at the Saghanefars of Kebría Kola in Babol County](image3)
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 Saghanebars of Kabud Kola in Babol County

Fig. 7. The Rain Angel at the Saghanebars 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 Yash†*, 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 *Saghane†ar* 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.
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 (Ismaelpour, 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 (Ismaelpour 2002, 88)

$^{12}$ In Vedic mythology, he is holding the heavenly waters win the form of a dragon (Ismaelpour 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 childbirth. 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 same out from within a blue lotus at his birth (ibid:...
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 Saghaneafars, 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.

References


[23] Raof, Solmaz, (2020). Comparative study of religious monuments at Gilan (boghe) and Mazandaran (Saqqa – nefars) in Qajar period: to emphasis on architectural features and artistic motifs, PhD thesis in Archeology, Tarbiat Modares University. (in Persian)


خدا باران (تیشر)؛ نمونه موردی بقعه‌های گیلان و سقانفارهای مازندران

سولماز رئوف، جواد نیستانی، سیدمهدی موسوی کوهر

چکیده: شخصیت‌های استاده‌ای با عنوان خدا یا فرشت با دستان متعدد در فرهنگ‌های مختلف به چشم می‌خورند. در تعدادی از بقعه‌های گیلان و سقانفارهای مازندران نشان‌گونه‌هایی از دست‌های زیاد رو به بالا تصویر شده که بنا بر کتیبه آن، فرشته‌ای مطلق بوده که این است. در اساسی ایرانی آهانت این شخصیت مخصوص آب‌دری این شده و فرشت باران است. هدف از این تحقیق بررسی کارکرد شخصیتهای و تقسیم‌بندی انسان‌گونه جدید دست‌نرد ایرانیان، هندوها و بوداهاست. در تمامی این فرهنگ‌ها، دست‌های متعدد نشانگر یاری و کمک‌رسانی و دست‌های رو به بالا به معنی استغناه برای رحمت الهی است.

واژه‌های کلیدی: بقعه‌های گیلان، سقانفارهای مازندران، فرشته باران، هندو، بودایی، کریلا.