

Survey on The Status of Cypress in World Myths

Parvaneh Adelzadeh¹, Khalil Hadidi¹, Ashraf Jabari²

¹Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad university, Tabriz, Iran

²M.A Student of Islamic Azad University of Tabriz

ABSTRACT

The human being has had relationship with plants and flowers as the divine gifts. People believed that each tree is a god that gives life and takes life of the individuals. Cypress is a symbol of life and eternity because of its unspoiled resin and treatment properties for women. For some nations it is sign of death and mourning. In this article, it was tried to investigate the status of cypress in world myths in order to uncover the legends and believes beyond it.

KEY WORDS: cypress, world myths, legend, creation, death

INTRODUCTION

One of the reasons for creation of myths was social condition and natural phenomenon that humans believe in nature and basics of their belief are investigated. It can be said that they wanted to interpret creation of each nature phenomenon by myths and legend.

Myth is an intricate cultural reality that it is studied from different but complementary view points. Myth narrates holy and heavenly experiences; the incident is narrated that has been happened in first creation time. When time is silent and the archaeology is unable, the nations' unknown thousand anniversaries should be followed in myths. Today customs and symbolic traditions rooted in the past incorporate a myth. In other hand, it can be said that myth is a narration that goddesses play several roles in it. The stories that depict human and God secret relations. Myth assures narration of creation and suggests the origin and beginning of the existence.

Myths are like mirrors that reflect images of the past. So it can be referred to past culture and attitudes and thoughts.

Difference between myth and legend

Saeid Fatemi writer of Greek and Roman myths believes that:

"The considerable difference between myth and legend is that myth was not belief reference of any nations and it is merely a result of thought and imagination; in one hand legends were narrated as story for engagement of individuals, while mythical stories were accompanied by religious believe and miracles. In the primary societies that believe in myths is yet stable conduct, the primary persons were capable to distinguish them from each other".

Myth and religion

Myths in all religions are originated from daily religious activities of the believers. These myths justify religious customs. In religions, myth and custom are combined completely and complement and justify each other. In myth and religion different viewpoints can be found about world and the share of human in it that both of them are sign of competency in life and support during death and it is promising of future for human.

Tree and goddesses

In the past garden like temples were made near holy mountain or hill near holy spring by pillars like trees as goddesses. In minor Asia the almond trees were manifestation of Adonis and cypress is symbol of sun goddesses in these gardens.

"People worshipped tree as goddesses. According to a narration some goddesses were born from tree and left the tree like a butterfly leaving its larva. So "Rah" was born from Egyptian fig tree and Pawwet, the Egyptian god with jackal head was born from tamarisk tree and Mitra from cypress" (Gerbrown, 2003).

As Mark Polo reports the first Oygour king was born from a fungi and feed from a tree bark. There are similar believes among other nations in this case.

“There are interesting legends in Greek myths. In these legends the God appears as tree for releasing people from pain without deprivation of living pleasure. (Hall, 2004)

Tree in myth

Tree is one of the wealthy and common symbolic concepts. Because of permanent change, tree is symbol of life and by ascending to sky it is considered as symbol of stability like Leonardo Davinchi tree. Tree bonds lower world to this world and sums all four elements: water flows in plant and soil is combined with root, air is flow from leaves, fire is made by friction.

“In middle centuries human was considered like upside down tree, so that his head is compare with root and his boy is compared with trunk and branches (Bolkhari Gomi, 2005) .

“In east tree of life is upside down. According to Veda texts this upside down applies concept of role of sun and light in growth of creators. The life is borrowed in upper part and life is penetrated in lower part.(Gerbrown, 2003).

Cypress

There were cypress trees in Iran, black sea, Syria and most parts of Asia thousands years ago and this tree was taken from Iran to Turkey then to Chypre for the first time. The name of this island is the changed name of cypress.

“Since its branches grow upright and there is no curvature in its branch it is called cypress” (Adelzadeh and Pashaei Fakhri, 2009).

“In Hezgiel prophet book (8-10:31), the Farah is compared with Lebanon cedar. The high trees like cypress are sometimes considered as Judah and his people enemy in Secrets book (5:29) that the songs of God break cypress trees. The god breaks cedars .In Ashieya (14 book 8) the pine like cedar talks pleasing that nobody does not cut us when you are slept.

Asheiya(8:4)reveals that when pine and cedar want to go to sky they fall. The negative symbolic aspect of these huge trees depicts the unlimited ambitiousness of earth great persons that they want to expand their power but the thunderstorm prevents them” (Gerbrown, 2003).

Cypress as magical tree

It has been referred to magical aspect of cypress. “In old times cypress was considered as a magical tree. Plato knew the ever green leaves of cypress as eternity and sorrow. The Romans knew this tree as a sign of god of death (Pluto).Usually cypress was planted in holy places. Van Gough the Dutch painter painted the cypress as life dreadful beams. The cypress was planted in the cemeteries in China and Europe. In addition to branches and seeds its healing odor was used. The Greece took the the patients suffering from epilepsy to cypress trees jungle for breath and remedy. The Hippocrates the physician of Cos introduced cypress as astrigent and anti-bleeding drug” (Abbassi, 2001).

Cypress in Greece myths

There are interesting stories about cypress in old Greece myths. “Cype is sign of mourning and sorrow and losing the friend” (Yahaggi, 1990).

One of these stories concerns to “Atis” that its language and allegory are accompanied by fertility.

“According to the stories and myths, goddess of Olympus fell in love with Atis the son of King Croesus and finally became eternal.“SiBeleh” as a goddess and mother of Ferigy gods worshipped in Greece emperor and many temples were build for her and she became caves goddesses and manifestation of land as primary façade.

“It was promised that Atis gets married with daughter of king “Pesi Neus”; Sibeles falling love with Atis prevents this marriage. So Atis hides part of his body under the cypress tree because of anger and tranquility and dies there. By demands of Sibeles from Zeus, Atis becomes alive, Sibeles buries his removed part of the body and takes the cypress tree to his temple in order to mourning for his beloved. This story has been narrated in the myths of Adonis and Sibeles, Tamuz and Eyshtar. A fest was held for memory of Sibeles and Atis by wearing masks and animal cloths accompanied by pleasing and dance and singing. The mourning groups carried the conducted .After that that in the day of tree day in twentieth two of March they decorated the cypress in the jungle called Atis with violets as a symbol of Atis and lamenting .So they brought Atis toward his beloved. All of these ceremonies were held accompanied by playing instrument and singing special songs. This lamenting was lament and Dies sanguinis. The loud songs were song by drum and singing of songs that the people became tranquil, they danced rapidly and cried and they were ready for doing everything. They hit themselves with lash and the blood was bleeding. They torn their bodies and poured the holy blood under the holy cypress on Siebeles shrine stones. These conducts were so

high that that they cut their heads and bodies with dagger and they put them on Siebele and Atis symbols and it was called Fanaticus.

The mourning was ended in twenty fifth of March the cypress tree as a symbol of Atis was buried. All night was spent with lamenting on symbolic tomb. They believed that Atis will rise in the morning. Then the great priest held a happiness ceremony and announced that the god rises for releasing of sorrow and trouble. Atis and Mitra were imagined in similar ways .Atis is shown with Iranian broken hat with a head and half body with belt and short cape .He has been imagined with painful face like Mitra” (Razi, 2001) .

“Cypress was entered to myth in Helad and Greece. It had super natural value for people .In a legend cypress was introduced by Eteocle girls from legendary heroes. It was on the puddle and Gea(earth) brought it as cypress for its memory” (Shariyat Samsam, 2004) .

“The Greeks took their patients to cypress jungles to breath and remedy” (Abbasi, 2001) .

“Cypress is a tree that the Greeks gave it as gift to their hell goddess” (Dadfar, 2009) .

Cypress in Italy myths

Except Greeks the Romans believed in cypress myth.

“In Italy cypress is symbol of birth and reproduction. The legends concerning to juniper are narrated in Italy and north of Europe since juniper grows in mountainous regions of Italy and Balkan .It was holy for people of these regions and the evil ghosts run away from cypress. It was said that cypress is one of the pure and heavenly tree and it eliminates evils” (Shariyat Samsam, 2004).

Cypress in Roman myths

In Rome as the relam of goddesses and mythical believes, cypress was used in the ceremonies. “Plin writes there was a custom in Rome that a cypress tree was planted when birth of a child and it was called the furniture of the girls. Indeed it brought fortune. They thought that planting a cypress tree assures that the girl will be married. He writes Eros arc and Zeus thunderstorm firing stick, bats of herakles were made of cypress. In north myths, Thor hammers were made of cypress. Also cypress belonged to gardens gods especially Priapes and this tree was planted in the fields and gardens for preservation and prevention of probable damages. The old Romans prepared essence from cypress”. (ibid:72)

“The Romans emaphsized on cypress in their Pluto religious customs and “lamenting” is used as concept of cypress” (Dadfar, 2009).

Cypress in China myths

Cypress is shown in different shapes and symbols in China .As Mitford says in book of pictorial dictionary of symbols and signs in the world:

“In Chinese symbolism, cypress is a symbol of death and also it is realm of female .In Juoang douz(chapter twenty eight):the heavy winter fog is not left without cypress power, since it does not separate from their leaves. The old Chinese believed that consumption of cypress fruit causes to long life since it is full of life essence. They believed that if a person uses the bark of cypress in his heel he can walk on the water. The bark lightens the body. It was said that the firing flames leave cypress fruit and led to discovery of gold and jasper that both of them were essence of young and symbol of eternity like cypress .Outings finds spiritual virtues in cypress, since cypress has pleasant and holy smell” (Dadfar, 2009) .

Cypress was an old Chinese jar and east and spring tree. So it is necessary to plant near ground, the altar that is held in east .Cypress was a jar like all conical plants and it was symbol of eternity and its bark and fruit were used by eternal individuals.

Cypress as a symbol of eternity is found in houses of Chinese’s secret associations and in entrance of Biden or between sky and earth. Confucius says: Yens planted cypress near ground center” (Gerbrown, 2003) .

Cypress in Mediterranean borders

Cypress is a tree of mourning in Mediterranean borders and undoubtedly it is similar to symbolism of all conical plants and it was meant eternal because of unspoiled bark and ever greenish leaves (Shariyat Samsam, 2004).

Cypress in Japan myths

Sodabeh Fazeli in her book of symbols dictionary writes:

“In Japan wood of a kind of cypress called Hinoki is consumed in Shineto religion. In addition the wood of this tree is used for making different tools. The priest of Shineto believed that holy fire should be fired from two pieces

of Hinoki wood. This wood was used in temples buildings .The wood of cypress has been used in Iyzeh temple because of unspoiled nature and purity” (Gerbrown, 2003).

Cypress in Christianity

Cypress is important in Christianity. “Cypress is symbol of Christianity based on New Testament. Also it is sign of virgin Merriam” (Hall, 2004).

“Also it is symbol of continuity and it means Christianity, stability in virtue, honesty and also symbol of mourning and death”. (Karbasyan, 2000)

“In Christianity, cypress was considered return to his life” (Shariyat Samsam, 2004).

Cypress in Europe

After passing thousands years cypress has been reserved its important position in Europe.

“According to old texts cypress was symbol of reproduction in Europe. But later it was considered as as symbol of death and eternal soul and it is symbol of death and mourning”. (ibid)

Cypress in Dutch myths

Juniper is important in Dutch. “Juniper is found abundantly in myths and it was holy from old times. The followers of catholic fill their houses holes with juniper leaves in order to prevent entering evils and disease”. (ibid: 73)

Cypress in Asia myths (Mesopotamian)

Ever green trees like cedar, pine and cypress are symbol of hope after death among Mediterranean and Asian nations.

“In old Mesopotamia conical like fruits of pine and cypress were used in ceremonies for increase of fertility or as protector against diseases” (Karbasyan, 2000).

Juniper in Austria myths

Samsam Shariyat in book of herbal plant from Quran and different religions viewpoints writes:

“In villages of Austria people hanged a branch of juniper from their houses because of fear of witches and they believe that since the witches could not count small and big branches, so they could not use trick and they know that it is because of pray of Merriam” (Shariyat Samsam, 2004) .

Cypress in Iran myths

Iranian respected to cypress. There is a relationship among Zoroaster, Mitra and cypress symbol. The sculptures of Mitra show her birth from cypress.

“There are other sculpture from Mitra that she has a hearth in her hand and dagger in other hand as a symbol of cypress tree. Cypress is seen numerously in Mitra sculpture and its holiness relates to sun worshipping believes and its conical shape is similar to fire.

In one sculpture a three heads Mitra is seen with Soshiyan (the last grandchild of Zoroaster) that looks around with six eyes. The myth of Mitra is seen in Buddhism. A sculpture of three headed Buda has been founded” (Ataei, 1998) .

“The seven heads on Mitra sculptures indicate the journey of soul toward heaven and passing from skies”. (Hall, 2004)

Cypress and snake

“Tree is a symbol of universe and snake sitting around the tree is symbol of periods of representation .The guarding of the tree by snake and or dragon indicate the difficulty of achieving wisdom .In other words, a snake could deceive every man and woman in achieving knowledge and eternity to eat the fruit for sake of themselves and the snake (Karbasyan, 2001).

“The Arabs called cypress the tree of life, of course where there is a tree, there will be snake” (Dehkhoda, 1998).

Cypress and deer

“Real cyparissos was fall in love with a female lovely deer, one day entered it in a hole of cut wheat pile for contempt, and its pain was so high and bearable that it decided to committed suicide. Apollo changed it to cypress

for prevention of committing suicide, but it is for this reason that deer and caribou like to touch cypress” (Shariyat Samsam, 2004).

It should be pointed that at the beginning there was no pain and sorrow allocated to cypress because of existence of substance in its veins, dark green leaves and shape of its branch as sign of funeral ceremony cypress was decorated in these ceremonies. It is sometimes tree of death, dead and sorrow and eternity,

“Sometimes cypress was considered the tree of Pluto and it was planted around tombs and shrines. Indeed cypress was symbol of pain, sorrow and death and pain of alive and dead and then it was sign of eternity and life after death like other evergreen trees. So it is found near tombs in old Greece, Italy, Middle East, India, China and also Christian Europe. And for this reason, it concerned to preservation of the body after decay and it was cut and died and its branch and leaves were symbols of death” (Hall, 2004).

CONCLUSION

According to the research, the myths were against the past religions, what has been remained is some part of a religious and believes and creation of plants and wonderful life of primary human beings and it was caused to entrance of plants to myths and believes without knowing that they will be narrated by next generations.

Cypress in one of these trees, it is a tree of sun because of ever green leaves as sign of spring. There are different viewpoints about cypress rooted in different nations believes. Italians knew it as a symbol of reproduction. It is a symbol of return to new life and sign of good deed and honesty and stability in virtues. Among Mediterranean's nations it was symbol of hope to after death life. But the old Greeks and Indians and Chinese planted it in their ceremonies besides tombs since its leaves and branches become dark when cutting. The Italians and Christians believe in this symbol too. But Romans planted in their fields and gardens to prevent collective damages, in Dutch the holes are filled with leaves of cypress to prevent entering ghosts and diseases. It should be pointed that the cypress was a symbol of preservation and it has been changed to a symbol of eternity and then symbol of death, so it is popular as tree of death, dead, sorrow and eternity. According to New Testament texts it is a symbol of Christ and virginity of Merriam. There is no scientific interference concerning to this case but it has been entered in people believes.

REFERENCES

- Bolkhari Gomi, H. (2005), the secrets of a flower, 2nd edition, Hosn Afza publication, Tehran.
- Dehakhoda, A. A. (1998), Dictionary, Tehran University publication, 2nd edition, Tehran.
- Shariyat Samsam, H. (2004) herbal plants from Quran and different religions view points, Charbag publication, Esfahan.
- Fatemi, Saeid, Greece and Romans myths and Goddesses legend, vo.1, Tehran University publication
- Adelzadeh, P., K. Pashaei Fakhri, (2009) plant literary dictionary, Mola Ali publication, 5th edition, Tabriz.
- Ataei, O. (2007) creation of goddesses, secret of Avest stories, Ataei publication, 1st edition, Tehran.
- Karbasyan, M. (2000) pictorial dictionary of traditional symbols, Farshad publication, Tehran.
- Hashem razi B. (2001) mystical religions and secret of Mitra, the secret of Mitra religion, translated by Behjat publication, 1st edition, Tehran.
- Gerbrow A., (2003), dictionary of symbols : myths, dreams, customs, vo.3, translated by sodabeh Fazaeli, Jeyhon publication, Tehran.
- Abbasi M. R., (2001), the trees do not lay, Rabeh publication, Tehran.
- Dadfar A. (2009). Pictorial Dictionary of symbols and signs in world, translated by, Tehran publication, Kalhor, 1st edition, Alzahra University, Tehran.
- Hall, J., (2004), dictionary of symbols in west and east art, translated by Rogayeh Behzadi, Farhangeh Moaser publication, Tehran.
- Yahagi, M. J., (1990) dictionary of myths and fictions in Persian literature, 1st edition, Farhangeh Moaser publication, Tehran.