

- Fazaeli, S. (2004). *Weird culture*. Tehran: Cultural heritage publication.
- Gholizade, Kh. (2014). *Iranian mythology culture*. Tehran: Parse publication.
- Grishman, R. (1970). *Iran from beginning to Islam*. Translated by: Moein, M. Vol.3. Tehran: Book translation and publication enterprise.
- Hamilton, E. (2004). *A review of Greek and Roman mythologies*. Translated by: Sharifiyan, A.H. Tehran: Asatir publication.
- Havoueiyan, A. (2001). *Iranians and Armenians common feasts*. Tehran: Hermes publication.
- Hinnells, J. (1996). *Recognition of Iranian mythology*. Translated by: Amoozgar, Zh, & Tafzili, A. Vol. 6. Tehran: Cheshmeh publication.
- Javadi, Sh. (2007). Holy places respecting to the nature (water, tree, and mountain). *Journal of Bagh e Nazar*. 8, fall and winter. Pp. 12-22.
- Javadi, Sh.& Avarzamani, F. (2009). *Sasanid epitaphs*. Tehran: Balkh publication.
- Khodadadiyan, A. (2000). *The Arsacid*. Vol. 1, Tehran: Behdid publication.
- Manoukiyan, A. (1984). *Feasts of Armenian Churches*. Tehran: Armenian Caliphate, Tehran.
- Nass, J, B. (2003). *Comprehensive history of religions*. Translated by: Hekmat, A.A. Tehran: Elmi and farhangi publication.
- Nourizade, A. (1997). *Armenian history and culture, from beginning to today*. Tehran: Cheshmeh publication.
- Oshidri, J. (1992). *Zoroastrianism encyclopedia*. Tehran: Markaz publication.
- Pourdavoud, I. (1961). *Yasht*. Vol. 1&2, Tehran: Farvahar publication.
- Proun, S. (2002). *Roman mythology*. Translated by: Farookhi, B. Tehran: Asatir publication.
- Rosenberg, D. (1999). *Global mythology, tales and legendries*. Translated by: Sharifiyan, A. H. Tehran: Asatir publication.
- Shahbazi, A. (1978). *PictoGuide of Naqsh-e Rostam*. Shiraz: Persepolis research foundation.
- Sharp, N. (2005). *Achaemenid orders*. Tehran: Pazineh publication.
- Toynbee, A. (1983). *A history of civilization*. Translated by: Azhand, Y. Tehran: Moulawi publicarion.
- Widengren, G. (1998). *Iranian religions*. Translated by Farhang, M. Tehran, Agahan idea .publication
- Yazdani, K. (2014). *Sassanid inscriptions guide*. Shiraz: Persepolis publication.
- Zarinkoub, A. H. (2015). *History of prior-Islam Iranians*. Tehran: Amirkabir publication.

projected upon and aiding the appointed

5. See also Baghzarmiyān, 2001; 55; and Ayvazyān, 2012; 95

6. Daredevils of Sassoun (Armenian: Սասնուս ծռեր Sasna ts'her) is an Armenian heroic epic poem in four cycles (parts). In the initial decades following the discovery of the epic in the late nineteenth century a general consensus emerged attributing its theme to the struggle of four generations of Sassoun's warriors against Arab rule in the 8th to 10th centuries. Since the story originally occurred in Sassoun County, the epic is also famous for sasna dzrer. Sasna is the nationality of Sassoun means a brave and demented person. Daredevils of Sassoun characterized with idealistic, quixotic, and aesthetic values. The symbolic hero is a superhuman with inherent characteristics of fervid nationalism seeking for humanitarian, kindness, and attachment for the poor; optimistic of good victory and beauty over evil. "Daredevils of Sasun" is translated into many languages around the world.

7. The second Armenian goddess following Anahita; the goddess of love, water, and sorrow compared to the Greek Aphrodite

8. Traditionally, historians of ancient Greece have distinguished between hetairai and pornai, another class of Greek prostitute. In contrast to pornai, who provided sex for a large number of clients in brothels or on the street, hetairai were thought to have had only a few men as clients at any one time, to have had long-term relationships with them, and to have provided companionship and intellectual stimulation as well as sex. (Kurke, Leslie (1997). "Inventing the "Hetaira": Sex, Politics, and Discursive Conflict in Archaic Greece". *Classical Antiquity* 16 (1): 107–108.)

## References List

---

- Afifi, R. (2004). *Iranian culture and mythology*. Tehran: Tous publication.
- Amini lari, L.& Mahmoodi, Kh. (2010). Nahid, the symbol of purity or caprice? *Journal of Persian literature studies*, 7. Pp. 51-64
- Amoozgar, Zh. (1995). *The history of Iran's mythology*. Tehran: SAMT publication.
- Avarzamāni, F. (2014). *The art of Sasanian*. Tehran: Pazineh cultural publication center.
- Ayvazyān, M. (2012). *Mythological commonalities and beliefs in Iranian and Armenian references*. Tehran: Human sciences and cultural studies center.
- Ayvazyān, M.& Terziyān. (2012). *Common shared Iranian and Armenian mythologies and beliefs*. Tehran: Human sciences and historical studies research center.
- Azadegan, J. (1993). *Primitive religions*. Tehran: Mirase Mellal publication.
- Baghdasariyan, E. (2001). *A history of Armenian Church*. Unknown.
- Bahar, M. (1997). *From myth to the history*. Tehran: Cheshmeh publication.
- Bahar, M. (2002). *Studying Iranian mythology*. Vol.4. Tehran: Agah publication
- Boyce, M. (1996). *The history of Zoroastrian religion*. Translated by: Sanatizade, H. vol.1. Tehran: Tous publication.
- Boyce, M. (2007). *Zoroastrians, the faiths and religious rituals*. Translated by: Bahrami, A. Tehran: Phoenix publication.
- Duchesne-Guillemin, J. (2002). *Religion in ancient Iran*. Translated by: Monajem, R. Vol.1, Tehran: Elm publication.

in any Christianity references. Hetaira rite at the goddess of fertility temples in Iran dated back to prior-Aryan matriarchy (Nourizade, 1997; 267-268).

The prostitution attitude of Anahita probably resulted from intercourse of Iranian, Babylon, and Greek beliefs and culture. They adored similar deities such that some took Anahita as Greek and Semitic goddesses (Amini Iari; Mahmoodi,

2016; 62). Therefore, Iranian goddess, guardian of chastity and pure waters, and fertility is excluded from any prostitution rite; rather, it was a mixture of purity, freshness, and blessing. Unlike Greek and Semitic deities, the goddess of water has always been chaste far from seduction, lust and desire; the maids serving in the temples were committed to the chastity.

## Conclusion

---

Religions historically influenced by and from other nations. Armenian ancient beliefs were largely dominated by the powerful neighbor, Iran; the effect, which was clearly manifested once Armenians conversion into Christianity such that the old tradition and faith survived transforming into a new religion. Comparing the goddess Anahita in Iran and Armenia, it

is concluded that “Nane”, rooted in Semitic deities, under the effect of Iranian school of thoughts, especially in the Achaemenid era where the kings were largely interested in “Nahid”, has turned into an Iranian Anahita, the goddess resembling Iranian goddess from a Semitic deity.

## Endnote

---

1. It is a ritual implement used by Zoroastrian priests to solemnize certain sacred ceremonies. The word barsom derives from the Avestan language baresman (trisyllabic, bar’əs’man), which is in turn a substantive of barez “to grow high.”[1] The later form – barsom – first appears in the 9th–12th-century texts of Zoroastrian tradition, but remains in use to the present day. In present-day use, the barsom is a bundle of short metal wires or rods, each about 20 cm in length[3] and made of brass or silver. Both scripture and tradition are precise with respect to the dimensions of the twigs required. Yasna 57.5 mandates that each twig shall not exceed “the height of the knee,” and Vendidad 19.19 (supported by the Nirangistan) requires each rod to be at most the length of an aasha and the thickness of the width of a yava. In Avesta, the number of twigs is 3-35. In present-day use, and with only one exception, the rods remain unbound. The one exception is the baj ceremony for the dead, towards the end of which the baresman bundle is bound with a strip of a leaf of a Date Palm (Oshidri, 1992; Barsom entry) (Source: Wikipedia).

2. See also Javadi, Sh. 2007. Holy places relating to nature- water, plants, and mountain. Journal of Bagh e Nazar, 8. Fall and winter, 2007. Pp. 12-22

3. See also Javadi, Sh. 2007. Holy places relating to nature- water, plants, and mountain. Journal of Bagh e Nazar, 8. Fall and winter, 2007. Pp. 12-22

4. Deserving reverence and respect; graceful; with Khvarenah is an Avestan word for a Zoroastrian concept literally denoting “glory” or “splendour” but understood as a divine mystical force or power

### Goddesses of fertility

Toynbee asserts that mother is the oldest artistic subject of mankind (Toynbee, 1983; 350). Some anthropologists surmise that primitive communities in ancient times were females-dominated; in addition, matrilineal is the survivor of the very matriarchy (Azadegan, 1993; 25). Pre-historic structural changes of mother-centered communities are often attributed to the primitive (father-centered) invaders. The system is also observed among later communities like indigenous Australians, in south east Australia, descended from mothers (Nass, 2003; 29); or in Japan where women ruled the states and political affairs (Rosenberg, 1999; 712). The major weight of Matriarchy is not only female power, but also maternal female power; female power, in primitive communities, was given on account of motherly status (Bamberger, 1974; 263). Most faiths, celebrations, and religious ceremonies were established relating to mankind economic requirements like the need to crops and livestock to have enough food, more children to help with planting and farm guarding, as well as fighting against enemies. All ancient civilizations share some of the rituals like cereal dance in seeding by blowing the sacrificed animal or even human blood and burying the carcass in wasteland; or dedicating the first products or child to the deities; as well as party marriage show of gods and fertility goddesses by performers (Nass, 2003: 17).

In Greek mythology, “*Gaia*” is the first goddess of fertility, ancestral mother of all life who was succeeded by the son and her husband, Uranus (the sky god); in the next generation of deities, Rhea, the wife to Cronus, is the goddess of fertility (Rosenberg, 1999; 70). Once the Titans give the power to the Zeus, Hera was titled as the Queen of Heaven; she was worshiped in old Greek mountains, and many ancient mother goddess tales were narrated. However, Zeus, god of northern

invader tribes (father god) espoused Hera to gain more dominance over the territory (Nass, 2003; 81). Of Zeus offspring, Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena, and Eileithyia were related to fertility; Aphrodite received admiration in Phoenicia and Assur in a pyramid shape surrounded by flaming torches; her equivalent in Egypt was Hathor. The Aphrodite tradition was brought to Greece by Phoenicians; she was associated with Universal, desired love (Fazaeli, 2003; 71). Aphrodite was largely panegyricized by virtuosos as female beauty symbol, the Holy Spirit and the spirit of many art works happened to the creation to the present. Artemis was the goddess of the hunt, wild animals, wilderness, childbirth, and virginity (Hamilton, 2004; 36). Artemis came into generation through several goddesses of eastern origins were integrated: Persian Anahita, Turkish Bendis, and Krtý Doukertna. All of her companions remained virgins, and Artemis closely guarded her own chastity preferring war and hunt to the marriage (Fazaeli, 2004; 40).

Ceres was a goddess of agriculture, grain crops, fertility, and motherly relationships. She was differently served. She was originally the central deity in Rome called as plebeian or Aventine Triad; in addition, she was paired with her daughter Proserpina in what Romans depicted as “the Greek rites of Ceres”. She majorly contributed in funerals. Cerealia was her seven-day April festival. She was also paid tribute in the May *lustratio* of the fields at the Ambarvalia festival, at harvest-time. Ceres equivalent in Greek was Demeter (Prown, 2002; 47).

Hetaira<sup>8</sup>, originally a religious rite, was commonplace in Greece, Armenia, Assur, and Babylon. Ishtar, the goddess of love, and war, dawn and dusk was associated to Venus. Holy prostitution was included in the Ishtar rite such that she was, on earth, accompanied by prostitutes and harlots. She was the goddess of prostitutions. Armenians held a prostitution ceremony in Anahit temple; however, it is not historically evidenced

shown a special devotion to “the great lady Anahit, benefactrix of the whole human race, mother of all knowledge, and daughter of the great and brave Aramazd (Abrahamyan, 1970; 100-109).

In “Daredevils of Sassoun<sup>6</sup>”, Armenian heroic epic poem, tales of the goddess mother pregnancy inseminated by water are narrated as follows. “A king of other territory asked for Armenia king’s daughter’s hand and warned them of anathema in case of being dumped. King’s daughter, distressed and worried, decides to commit suicide. Then, she goes up the mountain entering a cave and says prayer. Suddenly, she notices a stream flowing from the mountain; she drinks three times. The water impregnated her. She gives birth to a boy growing up to a three-year old child in a month such that he looked like a twelve-year adolescent when he was just one. The boy, reluctant to be named, dreamed a small chapel where he was named as “Oh! Son, you are then named Mehr . . .” (Ayvazyan, Terziyan, 2012; 42). Areg claims that Armenian water goddess is joined to the Flood myth and “Vardavar” festival. However, “Vardavar” is of the oldest Armenian festivals, which is known as Armenian drench festival among Iranians. Armenians douse each other with water, fly pigeons, and get together in sport competitions. According to scholars researching Armenian festivals before Christianity, Vardavar is assigned to the goddess Anahit (Hovian, 2001; 188).

Ancient Armenia greatly glorified “Vardavar” festival. It was traditionally associated with the goddess Astghik<sup>7</sup>; Armenians offered her roses as a celebration. Roses were white heretofore; but, they went red while the goddess stepped barefoot wounded by thorns. Since white pigeons belonged to the goddess of love and beauty, people flew white pigeons in “Vardavar”. However, it should be mentioned that the goddess Anahit was also celebrated in

Vardavar festivals, it can be even said that Anahit had higher status in Armenian mythology. On the other hand, according to the plenty of semblances between Iranian and Armenian mythology, it is necessarily required to study the issue from Iranian mythology perspective. Iranians, for instance, celebrate “Abrizkan”. In many ancient years ago, drenching festival was lauded in the early days of Armenian New Year, Navasard; however, it is celebrated in Août (August) after the advent of Christianity and once “Vardavar” festival was approved by church. Alishan wrote, “as far as we know, both Iranians and Armenians celebrate New Year in a ceremony where people douse each other with water”. Indeed, Iranians and Armenians share abundant common feasts, celebrations, and ancient ceremonies emanating from ethnic, national, and geographical proximity of the two nations in which water drenching celebration is not excluded (Bishop Manoukiyan, 1984; 111-116).

In excavations by Smirnov, water worship objects were discovered on Gegham Mountains. The following myth, written based on Armenian native traditions, uncovers an amazing relation between fish, water, fire, and the goddess Astghik lasted to the late of nineteenth century. Near Lezk village, Van, there is situated a tandoor-like water well named “sacred tandoor” with only one swimming fish meeting all human wishes if seen. The fish probably looks like a woman wearing a silver ring on nose. It is believed that it was a beautiful queen baking by tandoor. A crossing beggar asked for some bread, food, and finally dared to kiss her. The queen got mad at him; later, she was convinced to since she was good hearted. Suddenly, king stepped in and she fell down into the tandoor; king, trying to save her queen, also fell down. The king was burnt; whereas, the fire turned into the water and the queen into the fish on commandment forever (Ishkol-Kerovpina, 1991; 158).

third Armenian goddess. She was the daughter of “Aramazd”, the supreme Armenian god; and she also happened to be “Astghik’s sister”, the Armenian goddess of love, maidenly beauty, sorrow, and water sources and springs (Baghdarmiyani, 2001; 53). She has also been referred to “*Hanea, Hanea, Nana, or Nanai*” as mother and grandmother goddess; she was the goddess of wisdom, spirit of nascence, and the bride of immortality<sup>5</sup>, too. According to scholars, “Nane” was of the Akkadian and Sumerian “*Nanai*” goddess (Nourizade, 1997; 259). In prehistoric ages, she was adored in Transoxiana where once she moved. The ancient sacred prostitution rite has been existed in “*Nanai*” temple (Bahar, 1997; 103). As long as Armenia was untouched by Iranian culture, the goddess Nane was compelled to submit to the Semitic origin i.e. like other Semitic gods such as “Istar” she was left no option than a seductive leman instead of the chastity and immaculateness icon. However, increasing significance of Anahita in Achaemenid Iran led the reputation cross borders; “*Nahid*” worshipping, increasingly grown in the age of Artaxerxes II and under royal patronage, has been promoted in other Iran’s empire territory. Armenia was of the areas where Anahita exaltation was of paramount significance. In this regard, the goddess “*Anahit*”, mother goddess, goddess of fertility and healing, wisdom and water, has been transpired in Armenian mythology as the most honored Armenian deities (Baghdarsiyani, 2001; 53). As much as Iranian infiltration promotes in ancient Armenia, the more the goddess is honored such that Armenian “*Anahit*” happened to be Armazd’s daughter and Nane and Astghik. Pver time, the role of the other two deities gradually faded in the “*Anahit*” character and Semitic traits were substituted by Iranian traits for Anahit.

Anahit was of paramount significance in Armenia; as evidenced by Strabo, Pliny the

Elder, and Plutarch, prior Agathangelos and Khorenatsi, Anahit was of the most cherished deities. As Agathangelos – Armenian historian was a supposed secretary of Tiridates III, King of Armenia, under whose name there has come down a life of the first apostle of Armenia, Gregory the Illuminator- reported, the “great Lady Anahit is the glory of our nation and vivifier; mother of all chastity and wisdom” (Agathangelos,1976; 51). A golden statue of Anahit is built in Artaxata capital and Artasat, and on Taron border. As evidences reveal, it is inferred that Anahit is the Armenian ancient great goddess invoked as the existence custodian and beholder (Agathangelos, 1976; 106). She was also ascribed to golden mother; golden statues were dedicated to; she is the vivifier great mother living with the descendants; the goddess of the harvest and agriculture, and the deity of water (Russell, 1987; 253).

There were some Armenian temples in Akilisene, and there was also an Anahita temple in Tiladamprada surrounding Euphrates; according to Agathangelos, another temple was attributed to Anahit in Yastisat (northwest of Van) (Agathangelos, 1976; 50). It is stated that there has been an Anahit statue at the border of Anzavatzs near Black Smith (Alishan, 1895; 50). Aban feast held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November and the nineteenth day of month is called Anahit (Alishan, 1985; 143, 269). It is believed that Anahit’s worship, in Armenia, is probably borrowed from Zoroaster. Unlike Iranians, Armenians incorporated idol-worship into the cult of Anahit; although, Artaxerxes II Mnemon set up statues of Anahit and enforced orders to worship, as cited by Herodotus. According to ancient Greek historians, Artaxerxes II erected statues of Anahita in remote conurbations like Babylon, Damascus, Hamedan, Sardis, and Shush (John Hinnells, 1996; 137). The Armenian goddess Anahit is related to the similar Greek goddess Artemis, goddess of chastity. Tirdates III, the king of Armenia has

the Nahid deity found greater significance since Artaxerxes II and was summited in the Parthian age (Ghirshman, 1970; 321). The Arsacid I predominantly eulogized the elements like water and fire; water and rivers were acclaimed and voyages were strongly avoided as they felt concerned to have contaminated the water and mortified the goddess Anahita (Khodadiyan, 2000; 256). Likely, Anahita was highly revered in Sassanid era, too. However, Sassanid age lacked any statue and effigy of the goddess; sacred fires were set at holy shrines instead. Therefore, the iconolatry emerged in to Zoroastrianism by Ardashir I was ultimately lapsed (Boyce, 2007; 136-137).

Ardashir the Unifier, founder of the Sasanian Empire, was the guardian of Anahita temple in Istakhr, one of the Varjavand<sup>4</sup> places then (Avarzamani, 2014; 37). Or Narseh, the seventh Sasanian king of Ērānshahr, significantly contributes in Naqsh-e Rostam where he admitted that he was surrendered

to Anahita. The ring of the reign given by the goddess adorned in the full crown is engraved (as cited in Javadi, Avarzamani, 2009; 44). The last Sasanian emblem carved out in Taq Bostan, Kermanshah, under the command of Khosrow II (also Khusraw Parvēz) illustrates the appointment scene of ring of the reign from Ahura Mazda while goddess of fertility, benevolence, blessing, waters and rivers, supporting the dynasty, is symbolically pouring waters through a jar. In Sasanid era, holy fires were set in the name of Anahit, the sacred goddess; for instance, a fire was set and donated to the Anahit in Istakhr. Kartir, the great mobad, in the age of Bahram II, claimed for the possession of Ardashir Anahit and Anahit Banug fire temples (Yazdani, 2014; 115). Shapur I founded a fire temple in Bishapur, which is attributed to the Anahit due to the unique characteristics. Narseh engraved on the Paikuli inscription that, “. . . the Anahit who is known as Banug” (Yazdani, 2014; 67).

### Research hypothesis

In ancient times, Armenian religious beliefs were largely shaped by Iranian religious beliefs including the effect of goddess “Anahita” on

Armenian “Nane”, where Iranian Anahita was named “Anahit” characterized by Iranian goddess.

### Anahita in Armenia

According to Jean-Jacques de Morgan evidences, like many Indo-European siblings, Armenians sowed the seeds of religion by nature idolization. Then, the primary religion created a typical national monotheism where many gods and goddesses adapted from Greek, Roman, and some Iranian mythologies. Ancient Armenian beliefs namely religion, deities worship, were diverse, unclear and equivocal. Iranian, Assyrian, and Greek gods

and goddesses who were of great consequence on the subject of civilization, and ancient-cultural relations influenced Armenians’ psycho-social life and beliefs to a great extent such that Armenian gods went the evolution road through transformation (Ayvazyan, 2012; 77-79).

Prior to cultural interactions between Iran and Armenia before the Achaemenid era, Armenian pagan goddess was named “Nane” who was the

another adjective: Anahita meaning clean and innocent near Anahid (Afifi, 2004; 634), and is called Nahid in Persian. Aredvu signifies blessed fruitfulness and fertile (Bahar, 2002; 80). The three-phrase Aredvu sura Anahita conveys innocent strong rainy clearly referring to three functions (Duchesne-Guillemin, 2002; 236). Anahita was the fertility goddess resembling Babylon goddess or Elamite Nani, and later Greek Artemis (Duchesne-Guillemin, 2002; 236). Aredvu sura Anahit is the water goddess and symbol sanctified by Iranian. The fifth Yasht and the 65<sup>th</sup> Yasna refer to Anahit, the water goddess. She fertilized males relying upon the Yasna and Yasht. She is glorified by Hormizd; Hushang, Jam, Zahhak, Fereydoun, Garhasp, Afrasiab, Kai-Káús, and others sacrifice and ask for her mercy (Yasht 5, paragraph 17-47). There is no sign of the goddess in Darius and Xerxes inscriptions as they were believed in Ahura Mazda as the lord of lords, the greatest God; however, existence of other gods were not repudiated by them such that other gods were recognized during Darius and Xerxes eras in addition to Ahura Mazda. They were addressed “other gods exist” in Darius words. Xerxes proclaimed Ahura Mazda as the creator of earth and heaven (universe), mankind, and exultation, “the greatest god, Ahura Mazda is the lord of lords created the universe, rejoiced human beings, and came Xerxes from abundant kings to a throne; he is the unitary sovereign of countless monarchs. I, the Xerxes, great monarch, king of kings, crowned head of countries, ruling wide nations, potentate of the majestic, boundless, far territory, son of Darius I” (Sharp, 2005; 85). But, the name of Anahita was written in the inscriptions next to the Ahura Mazda and Mitra since Artaxerxes II (359-404 BC), “Artaxerxes the Great, king of kings, nations’ emperor, universe Crown, son of Darius the Great who was son of Artaxerxes, Artaxerxes son of Xerxes, Xerxes son of Darius I son of Hystaspes (Vishtaspa),

the Achaemenid, promulgates that Apadana, a hypostyle hall, is founded to the request of Ahura Mazda, Nahid, and Mitra. Apadana is constructed as I may be safeguarded from all disservices and evils by Ahura Mazda, Nahid, and Mitra, and may preserve from any havoc and devastation” (Sharp, 2005; 139). It is quoted that once Artaxerxes II tied Mitra and Anahita to Ahura Mazda it indeed followed populace. As Ghirshman writes, scholars have come to the consensus that Anahita tradition appeared by Artaxerxes II, and worshiping its figures in temples of Shush, Persepolis, Ecbatana, Babylon, Damascus, Sarus, and Balkh may have been lent a hand in confederacy of all ethnicities under a common faith, which long lasted in Anatolian nations (Asia Minor) (Grishman, 1970; 232).

According to Boyce, worshiping Anahita commenced from Artaxerxes II of Persia is Persian revolution. Artaxerxes II, in an epigraph of Shush, maintains the palace establishment was in favor of Ahura Mazda, Anaitis, and Mitra, and asks them to be watched from foes. Artaxerxes II officially and ceremoniously calls for Anahita in its epigraphs. Berossos, the Chaldean chronologist, composes that Artaxerxes II was the first who initially founded statues of Aphrodite- Anaitis and its encomium in Ecbatana, Babylon, Shush, Persepolis, Damascus, and Sardis (Sardes); then, it was pursued by Artaxerxes III paid tribute to the Anahita alongside Ahura Mazda and Mitra in the epigraphs (Widengren, 1998; 176). It is posited that a large building complex, in the north of Persepolis, known as “Fertedar temple” assigned to the age of Artaxerxes II, is one of the lord’s construction built for Anahita (Boyce, 2007; 90).

The Arsacid Empire also venerated Ahura Mazda, Mitra, and Anahita as the paramount divinities. The name of water-Nahid was firstly incepted in the Parthian Empire; Anahit was largely interested in the Parthian era;

## Introduction

---

The events narrated in myth are considered as true story, since they reference to the reality and always follow some logic. Sometimes, it apparently tells the story of historical events, but what is significant in the narratives is not the historical authenticity; rather, it is the concept description embraces for adherents. It is also significant respecting human attitudes toward oneself, universe, and the creator are expressed. The myth is a response to human failure in dealing with helplessness, weakness in fulfilling the wishes, and concern for unexpected events. The power of imagination extremely works here. Therefore, gods are created turning into lord of lords and champions; on the contrary, sometimes a mythical living being is created from a historical character or an ordinary hero such that it is characterized with an extraordinary existence; then, the hero gradually leaves the ordinary human character behind (Amoozgar, 1995; 4-5).

Anahita is a prominent, unique goddess; according to Yashts, she is visualized as powerful, white, pretty, and attractive (Yasht 5, paragraph 2), wearing golden shoes and belt, and a corrugated, luxurious cassock (Yasht 5, paragraphs 7, 64, and 126). She holds a barsom<sup>1</sup> crowned with hundred-jewels and earrings of gold (Yasht 5, paragraphs 127, 128); she resides among stars riding a four-horse carriage (Yasht 5, paragraphs 11, 13) of wind, rain, cloud, and hail (Yasht, paragraph 120). She is asked to help out fighting demons and enemies (Yasht 5, paragraphs 23, 26, 46, and 50). She is bestowed a pretty visage, robust shoulders and white arms, wearing tight belt and riding the coach pulled by four identical horses (Yasht 5, paragraph 11-13). Anahita wears a jeweled, hundreds of gemstones crown, shining shoes, and polished fur (Bahar, 2002; 81). Aredvi sura Anahita i.e. strong pure waters, is the spring of all waters on earth. She fertilizes male decent sperms

and purifies uterus and cleans mothers' milk (Yasht 5, paragraph 2). She nurtures seeds and breeds lands (Bahar, 2002; 81). As evidenced, Anahita was recognized as Banug in middle Persian in Sasanian inscriptions; the title was used by Zoroastrians and Muslims in Dari Persian. She was surrendered many sacrifices as described in Avesta, Yasht 5, paragraphs 15 and 21. In Persian Banug shrine, for instance, in Sharifabad, Yazd, cows were scarified, which were probably contributed to Aredvi sura Anahita, water goddess of Zoroastrians in Sharifabad (Russell, 1987; 215); or Muslims in Neyasar, Kashahn (pre-Islamic beliefs transformed in Islamic traditions) sacrifice next to a spring along a tree in front of scared Chartaqi every year (Javadi, 2007; 16<sup>2</sup>). Many sacred places in mountains near fountains – named “daughter” or “Bi Bi (queen)” – were most probably devoted to Anahid then. In Yazd, Zoroastrians now name girls as “Abnahid” (Boyce, 1985; 1006). Anahita was linked to all folk classes; kings and wealthy people constructed magnificent temples for the water deity like Anahita temple in Bishapur, which was a royal place of worship built by the order of a Sasanian King. Ordinary people also worshiped and resorted to the goddess in holiest sites; chambers with wooden and sometimes other materials, ceiling and pillar next to the farms where people craved for rain and vowed for blessing livelihood were Anahita places of worship known as *Sqatar* (Sqanfar) in Mazandaran province (as cited in Javadi, 2007; 13<sup>3</sup>).

### Anahita in ancient Iran

Anahita is Zoroastrians deity in ancient Iranian mythology. An-ahi-ta implies uncontaminated, pure (Qolizade, 2013; 93); it is named areduv sura in Avesta. Aredvu refers to a legendry river and sura means strong describing areduv; however, in most cases, it is accompanied by

# Studying the Goddess Anahita in Ancient Iran and Armenia

**Shohreh Javadi**

Ph. D. in History of Art, NAZAR research center, Iran.  
shohrehjavadi@gmail.com

**Ali Nikoei**

Ph. D candidate in Art research NAZAR research center, Iran.  
ali.nikoei1981@gmail.com

---

## Abstract

Iran and Armenia shared wide historical, political, and cultural ties with Armenia over long millennium historical periods. Armenia came under the rule of Iranian emperor since the Medes; from then they were politically, culturally, and religiously touched. The religious effect of Iranian on Armenian was sustained up to the middle third-century by Gregory the Illuminator until Armenian turned into Christianity. Considering that Iranians and Armenians are siblings and regarding the geographical proximity, it seems that the two nations were mutually interacting in different areas including religions and beliefs. In this regard, the present research intends to study Goddess Anahita's place among ancient Iranians and Armenians and to investigate the effects of Iranian goddess on Armenian god.

---

## Keyterms

Anahita, Iran, Armenia, Artaxerxes II Mnemon.