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Original Research Article

A Terminological and Genealogical Investigation of “Goat” in Indo-European Languages and Tracing its Roots in Artworks of Water and the Tree of Life

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Abstract

A goat is one of the most influential animals in human culture, and it has been given particular and distinct characteristics in different parts of the world. In Iranian motifs, this animal is represented as “intelligence, astuteness, the protector of the earth and the tree of life, and is associated with water, the moon, and femininity.” By highlighting the noteworthiness of the goat’s role and images as well as its relationship with both water and the tree of life, this article attempts to introduce and analyze the myth of the goat in Iran and the world through linguistics, describes the roots and genealogy of the myth. Also, this research investigated and traced the words šahāz in Lori meaning “a goat leading the herd”, ožka in Lithuanian and ujd in Armenian, meaning “goat”, in the aforementioned motifs. The primary purpose of the research is to determine the modality of the process of concocting the sign of the goat as a symbol of water and guardian of the tree of life accomplished.

The analytical research method commensurate with linguistics was used to explore the links between the roots of the goat words and the myths of the world. Additionally, the frequent appearance of this animal in artistic motifs has been studied. In keeping with the findings of this scrutiny, it has been demonstrated that mythological symbols in mankind originate from straightforward and non-abstract signifiers that in goats encompassing “leaping, fighting, smelling, chewing”.

Keywords: *Genealogy, Mythology, Goat, Water, Tree of Life.*

Introduction

The mythical role of “goat” as an archetype over time and throughout the world has been introduced and explicated based on the linguistic and genealogical roots that are apparent in Iranian and other ancient cultures. The behavior of different types of goats around the world has been led to a comprehensive variety of God-goat semiosis. As a result, in creating this symbol and icon, or any other symbol, we are confronted with a conceptual-objective historical network requiring us to examine the entire relationship between individuals and themselves,

as well as other creatures around them. It would include ethology, neurophenomenology, neurophilosophy, and a considerable majority of other approaches, which cannot be discussed in this article. This research concentrates on the etymology of words related to “goat” and the relationship between signifiers and signified. It should be mentioned that etymology is a form of historical-linguistic semiotics defined as the process of phonetic and semantic evolution of a word through time in a different culture. As human beings have interacted with objects and their surroundings throughout millennia, the meanings and forms of these interactions have constantly evolved. As far back as 8000 BC, we have observed the promulgation of

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certain cultures and signs in the human symbolic order that declare the nature of the human being and his biological environment. One of the most prominent features of the above-mentioned period was the advent of religions with a transcendental perspective that evolved during the Copernican revolutions of philosophy and science¹.

Goat, as a phenomenon in the human habitat, has unique characteristics which have been documented and interpreted by humans through the use of analogous or synonymous words in the form of images and symbols throughout human history. In this regard, the mythology section deals with the conceptual dispersion of the goat through the eras of history, and the terminology section copes with the human interpretation of the goat. Moreover, it should be noted that etymology has a useful contribution to make to the conceptual genealogy of a subject that has been included in the included in the signifier or symbol. It is important to keep in mind that the linguistic signified is not related to the linguistic signifier, therefore the purpose of this study is not to discover the phonology's process. In light of this, the most reliable Latin and Iranian etymology books have been cited for each of the words. The author will not assume any responsibility for any errors or changes to the details of phonology in the future. It should be acknowledged that in the displayed images of the goat, optical signs originating from myths are closely related to the genealogical semantics of the words in the issue.

Indo-European linguistic evidence illustrates that human naming in these languages was subordinate to power, conflict, and fighting. For example, the root "vir" in ancient Latin "man" with the root ueih- "to pursue, fight and battle" (Vaan, 2008, 681) and the root "pati and patni" in ancient Sanskrit respectively "male and female" with the root *poti- "powerful" (Hassandust, 2015, 400) also, The Middle Persian root "nar, nārīk," corresponding to "male and female," with the root *hner- "power" (Hassandust, 2015, 2739), are evidence that humans have had positive attitudes toward creatures with distinctive and significant attributes, such as struggling, following, fighting, and strength.

Biological evidence indicates that this animal has a very

strong sense of smell. In accordance with the extensive derivation of "bū" semantics, and as primitive humans regarded this sense as one of the most substantial senses, it could be said that the goat was selected as an intelligent animal, and communication with him was regarded as extremely valuable to them. It is worth mentioning that the root of the word "bū" stems from Proto-Indo-European *bheudh- (being awake, to observe), which is co-rooted with Sanskrit budh- (awake, to become aware, to perceive), Sanskrit buddhi- (perception consciousness), Lithuanian budinti- (to awaken), Avestan baoδ- (to feel), Avestan pati-baoδ- (to wake up, to become conscious), Partian pdbws- (to want, to desire), Persian būsīdan (to kiss), bīyūsīdan (to wait, to hope), Scythian bud- (to smell/ to figure out, to perceive, to know), būd- (to be fragrant, fragrant), Middle Persian bōd (perception, awareness), Ancient Greek πυνθάνομαι (I learn, I hear, I ask, I look)² (Cheung, 2007, 14-15). Therefore, the term "to smell" is affiliated with (understanding, seeing, hearing, telling, examining, declaring, kissing, wanting, desiring, learning, asking, paying attention, and caring). As many other verbs interwoven to the body are derived from this root, it is obvious that humans place a high value on smell.

Literature Review

In most studies conducted in Iranian and non-Iranian sources, the goat is studied as an animal in the one-sided approach. As described by Rotes, the article entitled "Goats in the Ancient Near East and Their Relationship with Folklore, Myth, and Legend" (Rotes, 2020) presents a mythological analysis, but this is only a descriptive analysis. Similarly, for example, in the study of "Description of Enki as a man-fish containing the appearance of a goat", he did not provide a novel analysis of the reasons for such symbolic patterns that had been produced being produced by the people of the region. Moreover, Rezghirad investigated the symbol of the goat next to the tree of life in the article entitled "Analytical and semantic analysis of the symbols of the tree of life and goat in Jiroft civilization" (Rezghirad, 2017). However, in terms of roots, no explanation was given on why the "goat

is considered the protector of the tree of life and the Earth". As mentioned in Afzaltousi's article called: "the Rug the preserver of wild goat figure since the ancient times", she pointed out the relationship between the antelope and Anahita, the goddess of water, and exemplified the liaison between the goat motifs in Tepe Hissar and Shush as two evidences of a concept related to water." (Afzaltousi, 2013). Nevertheless, none of these articles attempted to describe the conceptual genealogy of the goat by humans and to discuss its relationship with "water, moon, rainfall, tree of life, astuteness, and intelligence."

In this regard, this article attempts to fulfill the genealogy and etymology of the goat, one of the most mythical animals for humans. The study also examines its frequent presence in artistic motifs, particularly those related to water and the tree of life. In contrast to previous research, this study employs an innovative approach to the symbolization of artistic motifs relying on the genealogy of the goat through the etymology of linguistic concepts.

Research Method

This research used an analytical approach, which first introduced the special imagery associated with the goat—the goat-water-tree of life in Iranian and Mesopotamian civilizations. Following this, the linguistic evidence was analyzed concerning human concepts developed regarding goats including the genealogy of concepts such as "intelligence and astuteness, the protector of the earth and the tree of life, the symbol of water, the moon, and femininity. "To collect the data, library sources, as well as reliable internet databases, were searched, and, in the final step, the data was analyzed. Finally, the results of this research can hopefully contribute to the development of future research articles that can provide an interdisciplinary perspective on both animal and human cognition.

Theoretical Foundation

As every myth is rooted in reality, which expresses human wisdom and insight over time, it is possible to reconstruct the concrete roots of the concepts developed for the goat by examining the spoken, written, and ocular terminology

related to this animal. In this context, Nietzsche stated that when an individual discovers many things that have been shrouded throughout history, the feeling of discovering the truth is achieved. There is the same sense of pride in discovering the truth in mythology and all the signs that humans create. What is undisguised is the return of all signs to their entirely primitive states and forms, whose meanings and signifiers have been gradually aggrandized. There is no relationship between the moon, tree, goat, water, and femininity to the extent that one day this animal was veritably worshipped as a kind of god. Hence, one should ask what the origins of these symbols and concepts are? As Nietzsche indicated in (On the Genealogy of Morality) with the help of the etymology of words that the root of moral concepts in humans is completely concrete, semiotics and genealogy-linguistics provide us with an understanding of the goat.

The Myth of the "Goat" in World Mythology

In mythology throughout the world, goats play a prominent role; their relationship with humans has made them a frequent symbol in various artistic works. The goat was associated with Pan, Silvanus, Faunus, Bacchus, and Dionysus, and the female goat with Diana and Artemis in ancient Greek and Roman mythology, and with Marduk in Sumer. A goat was also considered a protector of pregnant women in India, as well as the chariot of Agni, the god of fire which was carried by a goat. Moreover, according to Scandinavian mythology, Thor's goats are slaughtered and then brought back to life. On the one hand, goats mostly represent both virtue and evil in the world as dual symbols. On the other hand, in Iran, it is a symbol of fertility, rain, the moon, leadership, power, and divine power. Zeus's shield was made of goat skin and his crown was made of the horn of a goat named AMALTHEIA, that gave him milk and is a symbol of sunrise, storm, and abundance of water³ (Smith, 1844; Rotes, 2020, 10; Staszczyk, 2020; Weaver, 2021, 143). Moreover, goat horns represent the moon (crescent shape), and the white light of the moon represents both "coldness" and "water". The association of the goat with Dionysus, the god of lust, can also refer

to the concepts of fertility, water, agriculture, and rain (Avarzamani & Javadi, 2021). This intelligent and strange animal was among the first to be tamed by humans, and when released, it quickly returns to its natural state.

Terminology of Goat: Investigation of Several Important Roots with the Meaning of Goat in Indo-European Languages

The definition of human being as a leader with the etymology of the word society and its co-root with the Baluchi word šōhāz:

The word is derived from the Proto-Indo-European root *skew- (to follow/to pursue), which is cognate with Avestan hac- (to follow), Sanskrit sac- (to follow), Greek επομαι (I follow), Latin sequitur (follows), Old Irish sechithir (follows), Latvian sekt (to follow), Parthian haxs- (to pursue), Middle Persian hāzišn (advise, to encourage), nahāzīdan (to fear, to recede, to escape), Persian nahāz (pioneer, leader), Anārakī dialect čānāye (to follow), Baluchi šōhāz (search, research, research, demand, acquisition), Lori šahāz (big goat, king goat). In reference to this root, a human being considers himself and the goat to be the same in terms of being a seeker. This concept is rooted in “following or accompanying”, and probably the root of šahāz (a goat leading the herd) is the same as a society (human society). Also, the preposition and indirect object of “az” in Persian, which is the same root as the Avestan words hačā (from), Sanskrit śacā (together, besides, with), Middle Persian hač (from), stem from the same root. As such, this word indicates the spatial or temporal origin as well as



Fig. 1. A. Terracotta, the symbol of an antelope with long and wavy horns, Tall-i Bakun, Fars, in the National Museum of Iran (The goat horn is associated with the moon and is a symbol of fertility and precipitation.) B. Tall-i Bakun bowl, Fars A. Source: Langsdorff & McCown, 1942, 30.

the direction (following or accompanying). This root is probably related to the English words (to say), ancient Latin insece (to say), and ancient English section (to say) (Vaan, 2008, 555-556; 569, Cheung, 2007, 124-125; Pokorny, 2007, 2591-92; Kroonen, 2013, 420; Taheri, 2016; Jahandideh, 2016; Mansouri, 2005, 205-206).

This evidence indicates that goats can be described as “pioneers, gregarious, observers, narrators, seekers, and simultaneously rebellious and obedient”. The exploration is evident in Figs. 1 & 2 a,b, and “the glory of rebellion and leadership” is clear in Figure 3. Meanwhile, the image of Haoma as an enlivening plant among the horns of a goat illustrates the connection between leadership and fertility.

The Etymology of the Word Ožka (Goat) in the Lithuanian Language

The root of this word derives from *H₂ eǵ- Indo-European (to drive, to try, to move). This word is co-rooted with the words: Avestan az- (to lead, to guide), Middle Persian niyāz (to want, to request, to desire), Khotanese hays- (to drive, to send), Khansari dialect vis/viz- (to search). Qohrudi vūšta/vūz- (to find), Natanzi -jušt/-juz- (to find) are from this root. Perhaps the Persian word (āz) meaning (greed) might be derived from this root; even so, it might be through the meaning of (pursuing). This root is co-rooted with Greek ἄγω (I bring, lead, take captive, command), ancient Latin agere (to follow), cogitare (to contemplate), and in Tocharian and Armenian respectively āk- and acem- (to lead) (Cheung, 2007, 171-172). The aforementioned evidence demonstrates the relationship between the concept of “goat” and “leader, cogitator, greedy, agile, ambitious, wishful” animal, whose “agility” is quite clear in Figure 1a, 1b due to its leaping. Likewise, the waviness of the horns reinforces the connection of this jump with water within one conceptual framework.

The etymology of the word “goat (ւյձ)” in the Armenian language

The word has the same roots as the Lithuanian word ožka,

which is cognate with the ancient Greek αἴξ “female goat” and New Avestan īzaēna- “leather” (Martirosyan, 2010, 58).

The importance of the concept of standing, tree, truth, contemplation, and goat standing next to the tree of life

As exhibited by linguistic evidence, “standing” has been a crucial concept in human cultures, since words such as “understand,” “exist,” “essence,” “system,” “establishment”, and “stanza” all have roots originating in the Persian language of “īstādan”.

In the German language, verstehen (to understand) is derived from the same root, which is related to the Proto-Indo-European *-steH₂** (to stand, to be placed) (Cheung, 2007, 358-361). Additionally, the words “truth” and “tree” in English derive from the same root source of the Proto-Indo-European **deru-*, which probably means “upright and sturdy” and is from the same root as the Persian words *dār*, *dāru* (Pokorny, 2007, 607-612).

The concepts of “truth, tree, medicine, straightness and hardship” from the perspective of ancient man were closely related to each other. Hence, the goat may be considered enthusiastic about the tree, medicine, and truth, as well as a great protector of truth or the tree of life. In Figure 2, the animal appears to be standing to feed on a tree in an exploring-seeking way, implying that it may refer to meanings such as justice, fertility, understanding, and standing upright on two legs like a human being. Figure 3, elucidates the “glory and firmness of the standing of the goat” as well as the relationship between “Haoma and goat”, a rejuvenating plant in ancient Iranian thought being associated with “fertility, understanding, water, uprightness, and leadership.”

Conclusion

Linguistic evidence reveals that the goat is a gregarious animal from the perspective of humans, and this concept can be seen in being cognate with the two words *šahāz* (goat leading the herd) and *society* (society), both of which come from the Indo-European root **skew-* (to



Fig. 2. The image of a cypress tree is engraved on the artwork in the Halil river area. Cypress is a symbol of immortality and goat is a symbol of fertility-guardian of the tree of life. Source: Majidzadeh, 2012, 65.



Fig.3. Clay bowl with goat symbol along with motifs of Haoma, tall horn, dog and stork that the whole of them have been symbolized as water and precipitation. Source: Ghirshman, 2013.

follow). Furthermore, “Cogitare” in ancient Latin (to think) and *ožka* in Lithuanian (goat) are derived from the root **skew-* (to drive). For humans, the concept of (thought) is associated with (struggling and moving), which is not unrelated to the conflict and playfulness of goats. Accordingly, a goat’s knowledge and astute nature are linked with the concept of “smelling signifies awakening or acquaintance and observation.” As an animal that feeds on the leaves of the tree of life, “right, truth and straightness”, a goat has captured the attention of humans, which explains why the role of this animal has been repeatedly depicted on all kinds of stone objects.³ The relationship between the moon (water and fertility) and the goat’s horn and the goat’s relationship with the hydrometeor, which is a symbol of fertility, can derive from the concept that the goat protects the tree of life,

as the tree symbolizes birth, steadfastness, and truth. The same idea has survived until now in the concept of tragedy or tragōidia, and basically, it is to preserve birth, generation, the truth, and the straightness of the whole of what can be called life, which we can either mourn or celebrate.

Endnote

1. Referring to Copernicus' central sun theory and Kant's revolution, both of which shaped scientific and philosophical understanding by combining empiricism and rationalism. Contemporary philosophical and scientific understanding derives from these two fundamental changes. These two fundamental changes have had a profound effect on contemporary philosophy and science in all of its branches.
2. Ancient Greek πείθο (I declare, ...), Old Irish ad-bond- (to say, express, announce), Old Church Slavonic bljusti (to care), Gothic ana-biudan (to command), Old Saxon anbioda (to deliver a message), Old English bēodan (to announce), Parthian ʾmbwy meaning (to kiss), Proto-Khotanese but-/bus-/buv (to find out, know, understand), Late Proto-Khotanese hambus- (to agree), Sogdian pšyō- (to understand, to recognize, to know). According to Cheung Bū (smell), Bū (awareness, perception) must come from two isomorphic but different roots. He also argues that Bū (scent) may be derived from Bū (awareness, perception). In this regard, he gives the example of "sense" to justify such a process.
3. As per the cosmology of Greek mythology, Capella is associated with the myth of the goat representing an abundance of water and storms. In ancient Greek culture, the hymns of farmers were known as tragōidia, which were originally goat poems.

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