

Analysis of Sport Symbols and Signs in Ancient Legends: From National Myths to Global Myths

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Abstract

Sport symbols and tools are investigated through a comparison of myths from two different cultures in two remote regions in the world. This descriptive-analytical study aims to examine some symbols and signs of Ancient Greek-Roman-Persian mythology in sport games and tools. This study attempts to identify shared themes, characteristics and the relationships between different myths to trace the development of cultures. This research proposes common origins for the myths from Ancient Persian and European cultures, and to support psychology theory and Semiotic history. The paper reports the similarities between Ancient Persian and old European mythologies to argue that those mythologies have a common source in spite of its different geographical regions. Mixing these sport symbols with myths indicates legends achieve to the power of signs. This mixing and fusion concept in sports competitions may represent in athletes to achieve myths' worth. Also, the results show that sport symbols and signs as well as hero myths follow the same underlying pattern and emerged as national symbols and myths but remain as global ones even in contemporary era.

Keywords: Sport, Symbol, Sign, Myth, Legend.

Introduction

"Civilization" is one of the most important factors which gives the nations identity. Studying mythology helps to recognize culture of the communities and National myths play a specific role in sport games. Culture is based on symbols and signs. Signs express a relationship, trend, or ability of myths e.g. coverage (clothing and hats) and various tools (combat gear and agricultural gadgets).

Greece is a cradle of civilization in the west and the birth of canvas of democracy, the philosophy of West, Olympics, political science, mathematics, indescribable drama including comedy and tragedy (Jafari, 2004). Greek mythology is the body of myths and teachings that belong to the ancient Greeks, concerning their gods and heroes, the nature of the world, and the origins and significance of their own cult and ritual practices. It was a part of the religion in ancient Greece. Present mythological study attempts to shed light on the cultural and political institutions of Ancient Greece and its civilization, and to gain understanding of the nature of myth-making itself.

Persia is one of the origins of the formation of human civilization in the world, the land where the system of mythological rituals and various religions e.g. Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, MAZDAK, Zaravan, Fars Mithra, etc. were born together and various sights of understanding human world influenced (Esmailpour, 2008). Persian mythology are traditional tales and stories of ancient origin, all involving extraordinary or supernatural beings. Drawn from the legendary past of Iran, they reflect the attitudes of the society to which they first belonged - attitudes towards good and evil, the actions of the Gods, Yazats (Lower Gods), and the exploits of heroes and fabulous creatures. Myths play a crucial role in Persian culture and understanding these myths is increased when the scholars consider them within the context of Persian history.

Many of signs in myths pose a kind of movement position in one of sport aspects. There are many questions about signs and symbols and how they are created and related. Hence, this paper examines a comparative study of these signs and symbols in the mythology of Persia and Greece are highlighted.

Materials and Method

This research was a descriptive analytical study which was conducted as a documentary study. Present study is basic research. Data were collected through available resources (e.g. scholarly articles, literary, mythical, archeological, anthropological, historical and cultural books and recorded documents on symbol and sign culture, myths, costumes, history of sports were used. Data were analyzed through measure tools such as receipts and tables. The survey

population was prominent myths of Persia and Greece. In addition to the mentioned collected data, the sport signs and moves among myths and symbols were identified and analyzed.

Results and Discussion

Bow and Arrow

Bow is an ancient weapon that predates recorded history and is common to most cultures. Bow shoot forward the arrow with saved force in their joint. A bow is a flexible arc which shoots aerodynamic projectiles called arrows. A string joins the two ends of the bow and when the string is drawn back, the ends of the bow are flexed. When the string is released, the potential energy of the flexed stick is transformed into the velocity of the arrow. Archery is the art or sport of shooting arrow from bows (Paterson, 1985). Nowadays, bows and arrows are used primarily for hunting and for the sport of archery. Though they are still occasionally used as weapons of war, the development of gunpowder and muskets, and the growing size of armies, led to their replacement in warfare several centuries ago in much of the world.

The bow in Greek mythology is signs of legends, the sign of the sport in the hands of Apollo, Artemis and Eros were found. In art and literature Heracles was represented as an enormously strong man of moderate height and his characteristic weapon was the bow but frequently also the club. Archery in literature suggests a variety of stories and legends in ancient Greece. Ulysses, the epic hero of Odyssey attributed to Blind Greek poet, Homer is one of the best examples of these legends in the twentieth book. Ulysses is indeed one of the heroes of Archery in myths. Penelope (faithful wife of Odysseus) thought that her husband after 20 years of absence after the Great War of Troy, won't return. Penelope was surrounded by numerous suitors, but Odysseus eventually returned from the Trojan War and continued his life as a shepherd and with using a bow and arrow and his skills in this field could tell his wife who he is (Fazayeli, 2001). Another instance is about Apollo, God of Archery, Music, poetry, art, oracles, plague, medicine, sun, light and knowledge in Greek and Roman mythology. Apollo's most common attributes were the bow and arrow. Apollo is also described as God of silver bow. Apollo's twin sister, Artemis, was the virgin goddess of hunting and archery. Artemis was the Hellenic goddess of the hunt, wild animals, wilderness, childbirth, virginity and protector of young girls, bringing and relieving disease in women; she often was depicted as a huntress carrying a bow and arrows. Her proper sphere is the earth, and specifically the uncultivated parts, forests and hills, where wild beasts are plentiful"(Oxford Classical Dictionary, 1970). In the story of killing Paris in the ancient Greek, it was noted Philoctetes killed Paris in the Trojan War by the legendary bow and arrow which inherited and received from Heracles. The bow is one of the oldest weapons in the world. In ancient mythology of many nations using the bow and arrow was common. Existence Archery (mixing) in myths such as Eros, Artemis and Apollo achieve this myth reflects the strength of the signal and the power of other ones have the myth of the owner. Archery is called the symbol of excellence in Greece (Khodayar et al., 2011).

In Ancient Persia, the sign of bow and arrow are observed in mythic epic heroes e.g. Rostam, Garshasp, Manouchehr, Hooshang and Arash. Rostam had used the bow and arrow for hunting and fighting with his enemies in the battlefield. Hooshang has used this weapon for killing the monsters. Garshasp used the bow and arrow for killing the giant bird and he has been shooting to the bird for seven days, finally killed it. Arash was also a good archer, he received a command to throw an arrow for determining the border of Iran and Turan then the arrow landed in furthest point and could determine the border between Turan and Iran (Salehi, 2006). The symbol of this sign in each of these myths can be accompanied by separate meanings. In the hands of Rostam, Manouchehr, Garshasp and Hooshang was a symbol of their power in hunting and fighting and in the hands of Arash, it was a symbol of sacrifice and devotion to homeland.

Sword

A sword is a bladed weapon intended for both cutting and thrusting. The precise definition of the term varies with the historical epoch or the geographical region under consideration. Historically, the sword developed in the Bronze Age, evolving from the dagger; the earliest specimens date to ca. 1600 BC. The later Iron Age sword remained fairly short and without a cross guard. Swords were also used to administer various physical punishments, such as non-surgical amputation or capital punishment by decapitation. The use of a sword, an honourable weapon, was regarded in Europe since Roman times as a privilege reserved for the nobility and the upper classes. The *spatha*, as it developed in the Late Roman army, became the predecessor of the European sword of the Middle Ages, at first adopted as the Migration period sword, and only in the High Middle Ages, developed into the classical arming sword with cross guard.

By the time of Classical Antiquity and the Parthian and Sassanid Empires in Iran, iron swords were common. The Greek *xiphos* and the Roman *gladius* are typical examples of the type, measuring some 60 to 70 cm (24 to 28 in). (Hanson, 1993; Goldsworthy, 1998) The late Roman Empire introduced the longer *spatha* (Fields, 2009) (the term for its wielder, *spatharius*, became a court rank in Constantinople), and from this time, the term *longsword* is applied to swords comparatively long for their respective periods. (Mantello, 1996) Swords from the Parthian and Sassanian Empires were quite long, the blades on some late Sassanian swords being just under a metre long. (Naish, 1991).

In the first millennium BC the Persian armies used a sword that was originally of Scythian design called the *Akinaka*. However, the great conquests of the Persians made the sword more famous as a Persian weapon, to the extent that the true nature of the weapon has been lost somewhat as the name *Akinaka* has been used to refer to whichever form of sword the Persian army favored at the time. It is widely believed that the original *Akinaka* was a 14 to 18 inch double-edged sword. The design was not uniform and in fact identification is made more on the nature of the scabbard than the weapon itself; the scabbard usually has a large, decorative mount allowing it to be suspended from a belt on the wearer's right side. Because of this, it is

assumed that the sword was intended to be drawn with the blade pointing downwards ready for surprise stabbing attacks. In the 12th century, the Seljuq dynasty had introduced the curved Shamshir to Persia, and this was in extensive use by the early 16th century.

In ancient great civilizations of Iran, Rome, Greece and Egypt, warriors and brave men in their sword was mostly used in the battles and the warriors were trained by the experienced trainers and masters. In the mythology of ancient Greece, the sword was used as a major tool of war. History of Classical Age in the Greece is tied with Hoplites. Hoplites were citizen-soldiers of Ancient Greek city-states who were primarily armed with spears and shields. Their main tactic was the phalanx formation. The hoplites were primarily free citizens—propertied farmers and artisans—who were able to afford the bronze armor suit and weapons (Gat, 2006).

An initial formation of sword was a stick and primitive man used the stick to dig the roots of the plants and hit the fruits in a particular height. By the time, humans used it in a longer size to create a safe space in front of the enemy and wild animals. After a while, the wand or sword changed in to the stony in human life, and then humans were even used as a part of their body to take care of themselves. The value of sword found a value of human hand. The sword is a symbol of warlike and also weapons of Jihad or holy war. Jihad is first and foremost a war with his inner which is probably the same concept that Christ was carrying a sword meant (Fazayeli, 2001). The signs of this sport were seen in the images of Bellerophon, hero of Greek mythology.

In Avesta, the various types of weapons and combat gear in ancient times were named and sword was also mentioned there. A sword is kept and held in the sheath or scabbard which a poet introduced the nudity of Zoorkhaneh's athletes as sword. The word of Sword in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is repeated 921 times (Ramezannejad et al., 2012). This sign was observed in Iranian mythology such as Rustam, Kai Lohrasp and Jamshid. Rustam used the sword to destroy the dragon in the third quest. Kai Lohrasp has also used the weapons to fight in the battlefield and destroy the enemy as well as Jamshid (Heydari & Dolatshah, 2013).

The Spear

The spear has been used throughout human history both as hunting and fishing tool and as a weapon. The most common design for hunting or combat spears since ancient times has incorporated a metal spearhead shaped like a triangle, lozenge, or leaf. Like many weapons, a spear may also be a symbol of power. The heads of fishing spears usually feature barbs or serrated edges: like throwing arrow a spear or javelin in ancient antiquity. In classical Greek mythology Zeus' bolts of lightning may be interpreted as a symbolic spear. Some would carry that interpretation to the spear that frequently is associated with Athena, interpreting her spear as a symbolic connection to some of Zeus' power beyond the Aegis once he rose to replacing other deities in the pantheon. Athena was depicted with a spear prior to that change in myths, however. Chiron's wedding-gift to Peleus when he married the nymph Thetis in classical Greek

mythology, was an ashen spear as the nature of ash wood with its straight grain made it an ideal choice of wood for a spear.

Pourdavood (1969) notes that the spear is the first tool which mentioned in 9th part of Fargerd XIV and Nadidad; he added spear and sword were the chosen weapons of the Sasanian Kings. 'Spear' in Avesta is called Arshti and this word exists in ancient Persian during Achaemenid era; further, the same word was used in the inscriptions. The short Spear is called Zubin or Jubin in ancient Persian language (Pourdavood, 1969). The content of the religious texts of the Avesta reflects the importance of a Spear in battles. Two very short and well-made spears were found in the excavations in Damghan. These two head of spears were made of bronze, and belongs to 1500 to 1200 years B.C, they were 52 cm and now are kept in Philadelphia Museum of America. The excavation of Hasanlu which belongs to the late second millennium, some head of Spears in nearly two meters were found. In beginning of Achaemenid period, the use of long spears was a great concern. The most magnificent pictures of spear and how to take it are located in the carvings of Taq-e Bostan in Kermanshah. In this stage of Khosrow Parviz rides on his favorite horse, Shabdez with very long spear in his hand. The oldest spears are made of straight plant and small trees which were entirely sharpened. Later, most armies of ancient warriors were armed with spears (Riyazi et al., 2009). Spears in Persian mythology were observed as weapons of Siavash, Wiyo, Mithra, and Siavash, they destroyed their enemies in the battlefields with these spears. Wiyo wears a combat garment with sharp spear and some golden weapons to destroy the enemies and evil's spirit, he had a thousand spears while riding on his chariot. Spears are common weapons for warriors, hunters, and the men and women Gods. Pillars are considered as a sort of twin for spears in some ancient texts. Spear is like axis or radius of the Sun and the action symbol undifferentiated substance, unique material or heavenly interplay. The force of spears belongs to the power of the community and social authority before spear holder. Hence, the spears has reached this symbolic position as hands of law; in addition, spears are backup contracts, debates and trials (Fazayeli, 2001).

Spears left many images in Greek mythology. Spears are observed in hands of Achilles, Ayas, Ares, Hades, Athena, and Oedipus clearly. A part of story in the ancient Greek myth of the Trojan was said Ithaca, Odseos with a poisonous spear of Telemachus wounded and killed in the War that have been obtained from the vase from 560 to 550 BC. Spear is one of the most important war tools (Farokhi, 2009). Today, spear is used in pole vault and Zubin is used in javelin throw. Existence of Spear (mixing) in the mythic characters e.g. Oedipus, Poseidon, Hades, Aya, Ares, Athena and Achilles represents the achievement of these myths to symbolize the power of the social power of the mythical Greek and the Persian myths such as Wiyo and Mithra are the destroying symbol of the devilish forces.

Mace

A mace is a blunt weapon, a type of club or virge that uses a heavy head on the end of a handle to deliver powerful blows. A mace typically consists of a strong, heavy, wooden or metal

shaft, often reinforced with metal, featuring a head made of stone, copper, bronze, iron, or steel. Mace is one of the oldest weapons that angels and deities of Avesta use it (Heydari and Dolatshah, 2013). Persians used a variety of maces. Unlike Romans, Persians fielded large numbers of heavily armored and armed cavalry. For a heavily armed Persian knight, a mace was as effective as a sword or battle axe. In fact, *Shahnameh*, the most famous Persian epic poem, has many references to heavily armored knights facing each other using maces, axes, and swords. In the Ancient Persia, mace has been seen in the hands of mythical characters such as Humm, Indra, Mithra, Rustam, Freydu, and Garhasp. This sign and weapon appears in each of these myths differently and poses a variety of applications. For instance, mace in hands of Humm whom had a fighter figure and used his mace against criminals and prostitutes. Indra was also the god of war in the hands of a fiery Mace by which to fight the demon of drought. When Indra hit the demon by his fiery mace on the back and face, the heaven and earth shake from fear and the demon fell into the water and blocked the passage of water and the prisoners were released and they killed him. Further, Mithra's mace has hundreds of nodes and hundreds metal blade which Mithra hit a mighty mace on the demons' heads in hell three times a day. Due to the fear of Mace, the demons stop to play with people's minds mental. The Mace was hit on the demons' heads in Hafez's *Minoo* creatures. In the mythical heroes, Rustam killed demons with his Mace and Freydu, Iranian Mythical king, also ordered to make a mace with cow head then he defeated Zakhak by mace on his heads. Garhasp could kill a dragon. It was told that this sign is a symbol of stroke, the deviation winner, and dividing of life and death in myths (Qaemi, 2013).

In Greek culture, a mace was observed in the hands of mythical heroes e.g. Hercules and Zeus. In the mythology of ancient Greece, mace is made of olive wood which is a symbol of Hercules (Heracles). Poorkhaleghi and Tabasi (2012) noted that Mace is recognized as Heracles' weapon. During the first rite, hunting Nemean lion, mace is made of oak wood. Mace is the symbol of super authority. The mace is also a symbol of justice and triumph against enemies. Mace has changed into *Meels*¹ over time in Zoorkhaneh, Iranian Traditional gymnasium literally the "house of strength". An aspiring member may be a male from any social class or religion, but they must first spend at least a month watching from the audience before they can join. Traditionally, the Zoorkhanehs demanded no payment from their athletes, and depended instead on public donations. In return, the Zoorkhaneh provided community services and protection. One example is the "casting of flowers" ceremony in which athletes held Koshti (wrestling) matches and other displays of strength to raise funds for the needy. Zoorkhanehs have commonly had strong political affiliations, either advocating or denouncing particular governments. This type of sports diplomacy is said to be a natural extension of the patriotic nature of Zoorkhaneh training dating back to the days when Pahlevans served in the king's court. Ultimately, Mace is the symbol of justice and oppression in Iranian culture and culture is a symbol of war and power in Greek culture.

¹ Meels are bowling-pin shaped wooden clubs of varying sizes and weights, which are swung in certain patterns as part of an exercise program

Wrestling

Wrestling represents one of the oldest forms of combat. Literary references to it occur as early as in the Iliad, in which Homer recounts the Trojan War of the 13th or 12th century BC.² In ancient Greece wrestling occupied an important place in legend and literature; wrestling competition, brutal in many aspects, served as the focal sport of the ancient Olympic Games. The ancient Romans borrowed heavily from Greek wrestling, but eliminated much of its brutality. Some of the earliest references to wrestling can be found in wrestling mythology. The Epic of Gilgamesh established his credibility as a leader, after wrestling Enkidu. Greek mythology celebrates the rise of Zeus as ruler of the earth after a wrestling match with his father, Cronus. Both Heracles and Theseus were famous for their wrestling against man and beast. The Mahabharata describes a Malla-dwandwa (wrestling match) between the accomplished wrestlers Bhima and Jarasandha. Rostam of the Shahnameh (Persian Epic poetry) is regarded by Iranian Pahlevans as the greatest wrestler.

Mythic adventure such as Hercules and Cadmus represents kind of conflict between the mythological characters that is kind of sign of wrestling. In mythological stories of ancient Greece, wrestling is noted frequently. For instance, a part of an ancient Greek myth mentioned that Hermes (God of Sport and trade) won a wrestling match against Eros (God of Love). (Deem, 2007).

In Ancient Persian civilization, it can be noted about the word of wrestling and its meaning and origin that the ancient Persians and Zoroastrians fasten a belt on their waist and focus on praying in the front of the fire in the sunset, that belt was called wrestling belt and the wrestling has come from this word which means taking each other's waist. Zoroastrian books asserted that a scarf or a champion belt deals with the wrestling. This belt was woven from silk or wool by hands of nuns including 72 strings which is symbol of 72 chapters of Holy Book and have 6 fields, entitled 6 chapters of the Avesta and it refers six Gahanbar (religious holiday of the year), each field has 12 folds in the name of 12 months of a year. This scarf was fasten around the waist three times which refers to good deeds, good thoughts, and good words (Sirafi, 2007). In Shahnameh, there are many things about wrestling and Rostam and other heroes' qualities, their silks and techniques in the wrestling. One of the most famous Persian stories is Rostam and Sohrab wrestling in which Ferdowsi narrates in epic poetry, Shahnameh. Wrestling among Persians from early time was used to protect the people against enemies and dangers. Shahnameh pointed to wrestling sometimes on foot or on ride in several occasions. Ritual Wrestling can be found in different religions and eternal old patterns are repeated and this show means the triumph of order over chaos (Fazayeli, 2001). Wrestling in Persian and Greek culture is a symbol of power and victory.

² "The Historical origins of Wrestling". Collegesportsscholarships.com. Retrieved 25 January 2016.
<http://www.collegesportsscholarships.com/history-wrestling.htm>

Stone weights (weightlifting)

Humans need to move large stones to cover the entrance of the caves for protection. Archaeological excavations suggest that throwing weights, stone weights (weightlifting) and gymnastics were practiced by athletes in ancient Greece. The first traces in the development of this sport were found when the ancient Greek athletes were used throwing weights e.g. Disc throw and Weight throw. Also, Greek word of "Halters" i.e. throwing a barbell plate or disc is the root of today weightlifting. Modern weightlifting in Europe was established by Europeans; apparently, rural young men began to practice for first time in order to show their power and superiority than their peers as well as attract young ladies by their strength. Stone weighting is a symbol of high body strength. This sign has been observed in the hands of myths such as Cadmus and Tezeh; in fact, this move is a symbol of their strength. Milo of Croton was a 6th-century BC wrestler from the Magna Graecian city of Croton, who enjoyed a brilliant wrestling career and won many victories in the most important athletic festivals of ancient Greece. (Spivey, 2004; Poliakoff, 1987; Harris, 1964) Milo was the first weightlifter in the world of scientific progress. Milo lift up a calf from the ground every day and put it on his both hands until the calf became full grow cow.

In ancient Persia, it used to be common to lift the stone for strength test of Pahlevans but today it is known as weightlifting in the World. Certainly, lifting weights in ancient times was show off power for entertainment. In bronze statuettes of Lorestan, some athletes' statutes were found which raised the weight with both hands over the head. Weightlifting is considered in Persian myths. In one of the senses in Rustam story, Div Akvan lift a large stone over Rustam's head when Rustam was sleeping. In addition, lifting weights exercise is a part of the basic movements in Zoorkhaneh which is called "Stone". The athlete moves a pair of oval-shaped piece of this stone weighing 36 to 42 kg, which is two, while one sleeps on his back, moves in two directions (Riyazi et al., 2009). This sign was observed among the mythical heroes e.g. Rustam saved Bijan from well through moving and lifting the stone which was blocked the well by the enemies. This Rusam's ability is one of symbols of his power among other well-known heroes. Stone weighting which has been converted to weightlifting is a symbol of high physical strength in Iranian and Greek Culture.

Conclusion

The results of present east and west mythology suggest that arrow, bow, spear, sword, etc. received the most signs. The results confirm a prominent place in the sanctity and significance of the myths e.g. Achilles, Ayas, Hercules, Arash, Rustam. Regarding the sanctity and reciprocal importance of signs, it means these signs are the outcome of life and work, hunting and war and religion and have also mythological place. On the other hand, these signs represent the power of mythology and doubled effect on the assessment of the power and sanctity of mythology. Hence, these mythical signs wonderfully emerge in games, rituals, dances

and sport. Archery, spear and sword have been effective signs and purposeful tools for a long time in the history of human life. These signs received many changes under various social circumstances for different purpose. Although, arrow, bow and spear always hit the aim and aiming is a sign of success but a unique target exists in the heart of aiming. Variety of sports and their valuable place were affected by these signs and symbols. Most modern sports in such this way were affected by these symbolic factors related to the signs listed. Semiotics practices of these exercises are helpful to have a better understanding of this phenomenon. The study of sport symbols and signs in ancient legends from different remote regions e.g. Persia, Greece and Rome shows many common shares among these national myths of different nations and cultures which might reach to global myths and mono-myth.

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