

Fertility Cults Re-Assessed: A Comparative Mythological Study of Fertility Deities

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ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to do a comparative study of fertility cults using secondary sources across five ancient and living mythological traditions — Lajja Gauri (India), Artemis (Greece), Drukpa Kunley (Bhutan/Tibet), Kokopelli (South-western North America), and Hapi (Egypt) using secondary sources in order to examine how societies knitted their fears about reproduction, agrarian survival, and mortality into divine form. With a comparative-mythological framework that draws on naturalistic, structural, psychological, phylogenetic, and linguistic approaches, the paper argues that fertility deities in different geographical and cultural contexts had shared outlook: the explicit display of reproductive anatomy, the association of destructive and generative power to a single deity and a possible cross cultural amalgamation between goddesses of geographically adjacent regions. The paper further highlights that fertility was not only associated with females but people in the past had fluid gender boundaries based on rationality and logic. Relying on archaeological, epigraphic, and literary evidence, the paper concludes that fertility cult worship is still prevalent in the twenty-first century but in a transformed form. This can be witnessed through rituals, festivals, and folklores indicating that its significance remains psychologically, culturally and socially functional.

Keywords: Fertility cults, Fertility deities, Comparative mythology, Ancient religion, Ritual and fertility.

1. INTRODUCTION

The roots of fertility cult go back to the early civilizations of humans with fertility cults and the worship of the "Great Mother". Archaeological evidence points at nearly every ancient culture having some mysterious worship of fertility and the rhythms of procreation, birth, and death. Most of these were passed down from generation to generation, in the form of myths, stories as well as through hymns and rituals. However as the myths remain fluid they are conveniently adopted by the society. These myths are reflections of human apprehensions and perceptions. To analyse and construct the concept of fertility cult, historians and archaeologists often depend on art, mythology, religious practices and traditions as the configurations of the communities' culture which often tend to be reflective of human evolution, their needs, desires and beliefs.

This paper argues that despite arising in separate cultural contexts across the ancient world, fertility deities often coincide on a small set of shared symbolic strategies: the explicit display of reproductive anatomy rather than gentle, hidden expression; the synthesis of generative and destructive power within a single

figure; and a traceable genealogical borrowing between goddesses and gods of geographically adjacent or historically contacted regions.

It further highlights that gender played a trivial role in how ancient societies imagined the divine source of fertility: female, male, and androgynous or intersex deities all performing the identical cultic function of assuring human and agricultural abundance, suggesting that the *function* of fertility worship was fluid than the more rigidly gendered systems that succeeded it.

To substantiate this, the paper taps on five case studies spanning distinct fertility deity across regions namely Lajja Gauri (India), Artemis (Greece), Drukpa Kunley (Bhutan and Tibet), Kokopelli (South-western North America), and Hapi (Egypt). These deities are analysed through a comparative-mythological lens incorporating naturalistic, structural, psychological (archetypal), phylogenetic, and linguistic approaches.

MEANING OF THE TERM

The term "Fertility Cult" has been fashionable for the last three generations of anthropologists and archaeologists, and may at times have been used and abused too readily. The word "cult" implies beliefs and rituals or at least performances. When used, the term should be defined both in terms of concepts and of ritualistic behaviour involved.¹ Fertility cult according to Merriam Webster dictionary, defines a system of nature worship involving rites and ceremonies believed to ensure productiveness of plants, animals, and people, often directed towards the propitiation of an associated deity. The term "Fertility Cult" implies a ritualistic performance meant to promote fertility of nature or human procreation.²

SIGNIFICANCE OF FERTILITY CULT

People in the ancient world often merged spiritual beliefs with the natural realm, developing unique religious beliefs based on the geography and climate of each region. The people of the past may have developed sexually infused religious beliefs based on their observations of nature such as the life-giving properties of water and the fertile marsh regions. The fundamental connection between the physical and spiritual realms led to the development of certain religious practices. These ancient cults may have also practiced animal and human sacrifices, believing that blood, the symbol of life, would return to the earth and appease the gods.³ The purpose behind emergence of fertility cult can be divided into two:

1. Fertility concerned with soil and land- As the ancient societies were agro-pastoralists, having fertile land was an important factor to them. They started developing their religious and spiritual beliefs around the natural phenomenon, in a hope of having good produce without being affected by any natural calamity.

¹Anthony Bonanno. *Archaeology and fertility cult in the ancient Mediterranean*. The University of Malta. B.R. Gruner Publishing Co. Amsterdam. 1985. P.2

²Anthony Bonanno. *Archaeology and fertility cult in the ancient Mediterranean*. The University of Malta. B.R. Gruner Publishing Co. Amsterdam. 1985. P.2

³Barry, John D. et al., eds. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary 2012, 2013, 2014: n. pag.* Print. exported from Logos Bible Software, 3:47 PM February 2, 2015.

2. Fertility concerned with humans- Fertility has a deep and strong relationship with the perennial human desire to survive and perpetuate his existence. The deep-seated desire of humans for reproduction, his questions and imaginations about development and the importance of reproduction in his life, are clearly observable in ancient myths and civilizations.⁴

It is this dual concern — with the fertility of the land and the fertility of the human body— that the following case studies will show converging on a shared symbolic vocabulary across civilizations with no direct contact with one another, from the river valleys of India and Egypt to the high plateaus of Bhutan and the deserts of the American Southwest.

THE BEGINNINGS

Symbols of fertility in ancient mythology have a history as long as the creation of first myths. Primarily, the myths were about description of the world's creation. This part of the mythology belonged to the time in which the man was bewildered and frightened in the expansive world and wanted to give meaning to the extensive environment around him. Through the study of mythology of ancient civilizations, we understand that most myths and vaunted goddesses are the ones that are mainly connected with fertility. **Harappan figurines with likely cultic significance, the venuses, Maat of Egypt, old Iranian narrative about death of Keyumars and the growth of "Mandrake" from his semen after forty years where 40 is symbol of female fertility, linga and Yoni** are few of the examples that helps one understand how significant fertility cult was for our ancestors. They were aware about the fact that fusion of male and female was necessary for creation. They personified the abstract and associated all rituals, customs and their culture to the same.⁵

2. CASE STUDIES

FEMALE FERTILITY DEITIES

Woman has been an integral part for creation and sustaining the world. During the prehistoric times giving birth to another human appeared some divine power of the women to the opposite gender due to which worshipping of the woman must have begun in the form of mother goddess.⁶ This phenomenon is observed across ancient civilizations, including Indus, Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Roman.

LAJJĀGAURĪ

Introduction

⁴Zohreh Behjati-Ardakani, et al. An Evaluation of the Historical Importance of Fertility and Its Reflection in Ancient Mythology. , Reproductive Biotechnology Research Center, Avicenna Research Institute, ACECR, Tehran, Iran. 12th June 2015. P.2

⁵Zohreh Behjati-Ardakani, et al. An Evaluation of the Historical Importance of Fertility and Its Reflection in Ancient Mythology. , Reproductive Biotechnology Research Center, Avicenna Research Institute, ACECR, Tehran, Iran. 12th June 2015. P.4

⁶Pratishtha Mukherjee. A Study of the Lajja Gauri Images from Gujarat.
https://www.academia.edu/42093358/A_Study_of_the_Lajja_Gauri_Images_from_Gujarat

The first artistic representations in India of the goddess are dated, by most of the authors, during the 3rd century AD, but this date can be pushed back to the **Shunga period**. The image of childbirth is attributed to the fertility cult as a symbol of regeneration. The Lajja Gauri attitude is associated with **the matrimonial fertility cult**. It represents an explicit invitation to sexual intercourse, and then reproduction of the species, in societies threatened by climatic conditions, wandering, child mortality and disease and then by war and famine.⁷ Stella Kramrisch prefers using the term Aditi- Uttanapada (female with raised legs) instead of the commonly used term Lajja gauri.⁸

Lajja Gauri is a generic noun used to name the iconographic representation of the nude goddess of the fertility cult who offers herself, the legs apart and the vulva prominent. The noun of “Gauri” appears, in particular, in the **chapter V (verses 8-82) and the chapter XI (verses 1-35) of the Devi Mahatmya** dedicated to the goddess **Durga**. “Lajja” means **shame**, referring to the sexual iconography of the goddess, nude and the legs apart.⁹

The earliest depiction of such a female can be seen from pre-historic times in the form of Rock paintings from Jaora, Madhya Pradesh. Marshall finds the source of such a cult in Harappan sealing, wherein, the female is depicted upside down with legs stretched and a plant emerging from her womb, pointing out at some kind of a fertility cult.¹⁰

Literary evidences

Enough literary evidence regarding the antiquity of the cult has been traced and the description given closely matches with the cult of Lajjagauri. ***Taittiriya Aranyaka, 1.28.1***, describes the goddess as headless (*visirsni*). The ***Rigveda (VI.59.6)*** mentions in this context about Dawn as “wandering headless” or “moving having left her head”. It also mentions the term “*Aditi Uttanapada*”. The lotus part above the neck, instead of a human head finds mention in Vishnudharmottara (3,82,8),

“devyascha mastake Padmam tatha karyam

Manoharam, saubhagyam tad vijanihi”¹¹

Mythology

The most popular story among historians about this sculpture concerns itself with the union of Lord Shiva

⁷Mansi rana. LAJJA GAURI... OR GODDESS OF FERTILITY. Published 2020.

https://www.academia.edu/44269016/LAJJA_GAURI_OR_GODDESS_OF_FERTILITY

⁸Sachin Kr. Tiwary. Ethno-archaeological study of Lajjagauri/ Charkhopadaine. Puramanthan. C.p Gautam. Bharatiya Kala Prakashan. ISBN- 978-81-8090-285-7. 2011.

⁹Max Le Martin. Lajja Gauri, the goddess of sexuality, from Mesopotamia to India. The goddess Lajja Gauri origins on the footsteps of the universal goddess of sexuality.

https://www.academia.edu/5246382/Lajja_Gauri_the_goddess_of_sexuality_from_Mesopotamia_to_India

¹⁰Sachin Kr. Tiwary. Ethno-archaeological study of Lajjagauri/ Charkhopadaine. Puramanthan. C.p Gautam. Bharatiya Kala Prakashan. ISBN- 978-81-8090-285-7. 2011.

¹¹Ibid

and Goddess Parvati.

After their wedlock they returned to Kailash and retreated into the caves of this divine mountain. For eons they remained here, in union away from all the worlds. Meanwhile, there was trouble in Devaloka and on earth as the Asuras had again begun to harass the devas and other immortals. This disturbed the Rishis, Devas and other Gods and they came to the cave entrance seeking Lord Shiva's help to vanquish the charging Asuras. Realizing that they were unable to awaken Lord Shiva out of his marital bliss, they decided to step into the cave.

Deep within the cave, the Lord and his consort lay in union. Parvati was taken by surprise by the sudden entry of the heavenly folk, and in order to save her embarrassment, she picked up a full bloomed lotus and covered her face.

This moment of Parvati attempting to cover her embarrassment (lajja) has been depicted in sculpture as Lajja Gauri showing her face covered with the lotus as well as her holding a lotus bud in each hand signifying fertility, life and creation. Her raw beauty has been depicted without any subtlety, her moment of union with Lord Shiva has been captured by the sculptor.¹²

The lotus has generative and mystical meanings to it. The Goddess, when intervened, does not cover her nudity, making her image the remote roots of yoni worship, Tantra and kaya sadhana. Placement of the lotus takes human sexuality to psychological and spiritual heights. As the helpmate symbolized by the lotus, Goddess and woman in and beyond sex personifies the spirit of life. Lotus is the yoni—Matrix—of the cosmos. As lotus blossoms the organic, fecund and beautiful cosmos emerge (Kinsley, 2003) and when the petals close cosmos dissolve to repeat the cyclic process. Lotus is the Matrix of human phenomena.¹³

Iconography

Iconographically, the goddess is shown nude having a full-blown lotus-head or human head, with heavy breasts, out stretched thighs, swelling abdomen with a bud like opening to depict the female sexual organ. Both her legs are spread open in the birth giving position. A full blown lotus or lotus bud is held in her either hand raised up in *trikonabaddha mudra*.¹⁴

The flat belly of the goddess demonstrates her intention and her availability for the act of reproduction. Figured with a swollen belly, it is the image of the childbirth, regeneration of the species. Her artistic representation is cultic and not pornographic.¹⁵

¹²LAJJA GAURI... OR GODDESS OF FERTILITY. Published 2020.

https://www.academia.edu/44269016/LAJJA_GAURI_OR_GODDESS_OF_FERTILITY

¹³ Suwanee Goswami and Dr. Eric Soreng. Matrix—Copulating and Childless: Mythologies of the Indian Goddess in Sex. Vol-6 Issue-5 2020. IJARIE-ISSN (O)-2395-4396. P.57.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Max Le Martin. Lajja Gauri, the goddess of sexuality, from Mesopotamia to India. The goddess Lajja Gauri origins on the footsteps of the universal goddess of sexuality.

https://www.academia.edu/5246382/Lajja_Gauri_the_goddess_of_sexuality_from_Mesopotamia_to_India

Through Excavations

The first “evidence” of the squatting goddess surrounded by scorpions was found in the earliest excavation level at **Rehman Dheri** (Early Kot Diji. 3200-2800 BCE). A small gold plaque bearing the female figure of nude goddess which was found few feet below the small deposit of human bones excavated at **Lauriya-Nandangarh** could be dated to Pre-Mauryan era.¹⁶ Rupar (Ambala district) excavations brought to light carved figures of goddesses. The earliest figure of this type is from the Kushana period which was found in Bhita from Uttar Pradesh. In Maharashtra at **Nevasa the sculptures** of Lajjā Gaurī have been dated to 100-300 CE. At **Inamgaon** (Pune, Maharashtra) few headless figurines were found during the excavations. The most unique and significant specimen was from the excavation of a house which revealed a fine clay bull and a headless figure along a clay ring.¹⁷

The images from **Nagarjunakonda in Guntur** district of Andhra Pradesh bearing one line inscriptions engraved at its base were published in 1940. Only the lower portion remains. The sculpture is profusely ornamented, on the narrow strip of space below the image the inscription is engraved in Prakrit language with Brahmi characters assigned to third c. CE. The inscription does not give any clue to identify the image. It was certainly made by a queen who was “A-vidhva”, it might have stood for the cult image.¹⁸

Rituals and regional changes.

The sculptures of Lajjagauri were worshipped by barren women with a view to procure offsprings. Even today, this cult is still living and the goddess is worshipped in Gujarat and Maharashtra and is known as Lajjagauri. The women who desire to bear a child, apply butter and kumkum to their *Yonis*, but in Karnataka only kumkum is applied which shows regional ritualistic variance within a same cult. In different parts of Southern India like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra, she is known by different names such as *Jugulamba*, *Matangi*, *Mesko*, *Nagnakabandha*, *Renuka*, and *Yellammanna*. In Chattisgarh, this cult is known as Dhundhi Raksasi.¹⁹

Similarities with Sumerian goddess.

The Lajja Gauri attitude: “Nude goddess legs apart showing her vulva” as an invitation to a sexual act is a universal representation in the civilizations of the Fertility cult.

Sumerians of Ur worship **Inanna**, their divine fertility goddess and her avatars, as the goddess Lamashtu, Lilitu (Ardat-Lili for the Akkadians), dedicated for causing erotic dreams, simply represented nude, spreading her legs, showing her vulva that it is the way of procreation and birth.²⁰

¹⁶Block. T. (1906-07) “Excavations at Lauriya” Archaeological Survey of India Annual Report. P.31.

¹⁷Dhavalikar. M.K. (1976) “Chalcolithic Region”, in U.V. Singh (ed) Archaeological Congress and Seminar papers Kurukshetra University, p.74-84.

¹⁸Narasimhaswami.M.R. (1951-52) “Nagarjunakonda image inscription” Epigraphica Indica. Vol.XXIX

¹⁹Sachin Kr. Tiwary. Ethno-archaeological study of Lajjagauri/ Charkhopadaine. Puramanthan. C.p Gautam. Bharatiya Kala Prakashan. ISBN- 978-81-8090-285-7. 2011.

²⁰Max Le Martin. Lajja Gauri, the goddess of sexuality, from Mesopotamia to India. The goddess Lajja Gauri origins on the footsteps of the universal goddess of sexuality.

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ARTEMIS**Introduction**

Artemis, Greek Goddess of the hunt and of childbirth and chastity; also associated with the moon; daughter of Zeus and Leto; sister of Apollo; one of the Olympian gods. Her origins are very old, probably derived from the Earth Mother mythologies. She is identified with Diana in Roman mythology. Artemis was armed with a bow and a quiver of arrows made by the smith god, Hephaestus. Like Apollo, she had many sides to her nature—she could be wild and destructive with her arrows; she could cause deadly disease in animals. Artemis was a deity of sudden death. On the other hand, Artemis could be benevolent: with ilithyia, she was helpful to women in childbirth. Like Apollo, Artemis loved music, song, and dancing.²¹

In Aeschylus' Agamemnon, Artemis is depicted as a **nurturer of beasts, but Artemis is concerned with human children** as well. Rites of passage contained a dual nature. One side emphasised the innocence of childhood, while the other inflicted terror by the use of masks, ritual wounding and occasionally death.²²

Literary Sources

Pausanias (c.110-180) was able to illuminate the complexities and plethora of Artemis worship and temples and recorded Artemis at Ephesus that provide reference to the pre Greek traditions of this area. Aeschylus, Hesoid and Callimachus are some primary texts when looking at the tradition of Greek Artemis. Their writings are mostly analyzed in Chapter one and two and used to establish the mythological position of Artemis in the Greek pantheon.²³

Portrayal

The Greek Artemis is typically depicted as a young maiden carrying a **bow** and frequently accompanied by a **hunting dog or a deer**. Along the line of the Artemis myth, she also became the goddess of the moon. As such, she is also commonly depicted with a crescent moon either above her head, in her headdress, or at her feet.²⁴

Legend

There are numerous legends and mythical stories related to Artemis, out of which one is associated with fertility:

²¹Kathleen N. Daly. Greek and Roman Mythology. A to Z. Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data. ISBN 978-1-60413-412-4. (2009)

²²Léger, R. (2013) 'A Sanctuary of Artemis the Fertility Goddess'.
<http://www.rosetta.bham.ac.uk/Colloquium2013/leger.pdf>

²³Carla Ionescu. The Enduring Goddess: Artemis and Mary, Mother of Jesus. May 2016

²⁴Wilson W. Crook, III, Editor. THE ASIA MINOR CULT OF ARTEMIS (DIANA). Houston Archeological Society 2018.

*Artemis was the daughter of Zeus and Leto, a Titan goddess whom Zeus found irresistible and subsequently impregnated. Leto bore twins, Artemis and her brother **Apollo**. Artemis was born first and, according to mythology, seeing that her mother was exhausted from childbirth, she assisted in the birth of her brother Apollo the following day. From this act, Artemis also became known as a protector of mothers and childbirth.²⁵*

Archaeological evidence.

Excavations at Sparta by the British School at Athens (1906-1910) have revealed important data about the sanctuary of **Artemis Orthia**. The excavations have dated significant changes to the **sanctuary c. 570/560 BCE**, indicating modifications to the existing structure. However, material evidence emphasises an unbroken usage of the sanctuary grounds.

Spartan figurines include warriors, charioteers, horsemen and bowmen found in lead, pottery and bone. Horses were known as the animals for warriors, more specifically for charioteers and cavalry. Offering figurines of horses, the warriors may have asked the goddess to protect them or thanked Artemis for her protection. The horses therefore could have represented more characteristics of the goddess: fertility and child rearing. Several figurines representing musicians were found, depicting both males and females. The instruments that were represented are cymbals, flutes and lyres.²⁶

Rituals and Practices

In the description by Pausanias, the rites of Artemis Orthia in Sparta involved a rite of passage ceremony for males. Spartan rites of passage contained races, trials and ritual nudity. The rite of passage for young boys was attested at Sparta from the classical period onwards, and it has been possible to reconstruct antecedents of this rite in the archaic sanctuary. During the rite of passage terracotta masks were used. Masks related to the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, were very rare in other Greek sanctuaries and may be the result of some circumstances peculiar to Sparta.

The masks either embodied the model with which the young men had to identify themselves; the youths and warriors, or they were the form of the savage; horrible and ridiculous caricatures like Gorgon and grotesques.²⁷

MALE FERTILITY GODS

Male fertility, and virility gods were present in most mythologies and were some of the earliest deities worshiped owing to their importance to some paternalistic societies. In these cultures, festivals, offerings, and rituals were offered to guarantee or attest to the fertility of their leaders and followers.

²⁵ Wilson W. Crook, III, Editor. THE ASIA MINOR CULT OF ARTEMIS (DIANA). Houston Archeological Society 2018.

²⁶ Léger, R. (2013) 'A Sanctuary of Artemis the Fertility Goddess'.

<http://www.rosetta.bham.ac.uk/Colloquium2013/leger.pdf>

²⁷ ibid

DRUKPA KUNLEY- The Divine Madman.**Introduction**

Drukpa Kunley was a "madman" (**smyon-pa**), an Enlightened "eccentric." He used poetry, song, dance, humor, drink, and not least sex to teach his contemporaries the great Lesson of spiritual life: that the individual being, with its countless likes and dislikes, is constantly immersed in the universal Reality.

The *Siddha-Siddhanta-Paddhati* (chapter VI), one of the earliest *Hathayoga* texts, describes him as:²⁸

*Who is sometimes an enjoyer, sometimes a renouncer,
sometimes a nudist or like a demon, sometimes a king,
and sometimes well-behaved-he is styled an avadhuta
(v. 20)*

As per the description in the Hathayoga text, he had a protean nature. He was a trickster who could turn himself into anything at all. He assumes no fixed roles and statuses.²⁹

The divine madman **Drukpa Kunley (1455-1570 AD)** is still one of the most famous adepts of 'Crazy Wisdom' in the Himalayan countries. According to one of his biographers at the time Kunley was an incarnation of a mystic poet, Saraha. The name Drukpa indicates to which particular Red-Hat school of Tibetan monastics he belonged and thus from where he received his instructions and initiations. Kunley entered the monastery, disappointed with life after his father got killed in a family feud but he left the monastery and all systematic practices again. He ridiculed the establishment and railed against common morality and conventionalism.³⁰

Occurrences of Phallus in Bhutan

- The **lamas** who are performing the consecration ceremony go round the house in a procession playing their musical instruments, while the lady or the daughter of the house follows carrying a basket containing **five wooden phallic symbols** on her back. After completing their circuit the lamas continue their prayer as the basket is pulled up with a rope to the roof. This is also accompanied by singing, and the ceremony is complete when four of these **wooden carvings are hung**, one at each of the corners of the roof. This is done, it is said, to avert **mi kha** (malicious gossip). The fifth will be kept in the house; it is considered a sign of good luck, a sign that boys will be born here and that the

²⁸Keith Dowman. The Divine Madman, the Sublime Life and Songs of -Drukpa Kunley. The Dawn Horse Press Clearlake. CALIFORNIA. ISBN: 0-9 13922-75-7. 1980. Pp. 8-13

²⁹Keith Dowman. The Divine Madman, the Sublime Life and Songs of -Drukpa Kunley. The Dawn Horse Press Clearlake. CALIFORNIA. ISBN: 0-9 13922-75-7. 1980. Pp. 8-13

³⁰Annette van der Hoek. Kabir and Kunley, from shock to shanti (or the importance of hopelessness). Jawaharlal Nehru University. New Delhi.

https://www.academia.edu/15141809/Kabir_and_Kunley_from_shock_to_shanti_or_the_importance_of_hopelessness

house will be wealthy.³¹

- The phallus, the sword and the ritual dagger (in other words, the shape of the zur chen are considered in Buddhist terms as the representations of the Rigs gsum mgon po (Three Bodhisattva). The **phallus** represents Avalokiteshvara, the sword Manjusri and the ritual dagger, Vajrapani.³²
- The **Gold Manuscript of the Fifth Dalai Lama** contains images of ritual cakes in the shape of a “Human penis representing Shiva, used in the rite for dealing with evil omens that occur”.²⁸ The Indian reference to the **Shiva linga** is also explicit in Bhutan as the phallus is referred to by one of the names of Shiva: Wangchuk chenpo (dBang phyug chenpo). This is clear evidence that the phallic symbol echoes its association with the Hindu deity Shiva channelled through Buddhism.³³

Literary source

Drukpa Kunley Namathar is an important source to reconstruct the tales and history of the deity. The text represents itself as having been written by Drukpa Kunley. The biography of Bashaney reveals a shift from Drukpa Kunley’s soberer and more intellectual orientations in the Drukpa Kunley Namthar, to the wild, crazy yogi stories of him that have taken such a firm hold in the popular imagination. This shift alone suggests that Bashaney wrote this short biography after a significant period of time had passed since Drukpa Kunley’s death, as time would be needed in order for the embellishments and transformations of the saint’s character to have taken place.

This fact, plus the biography’s prologue in which Bashaney agrees to write it for Drukpa Kunley’s Namthar, proves that there was some form of the namthar in existence – likely a later form, since the miraculous activities would have had to be included. There are very few historical sources that mention about someone having a character like Drukpa Kunley, it may not be possible to make definitive claims about him apart from the representations of him put forward by the Namthar.³⁴

³¹Francoise Pommaret (CNRS, France) and Tsahi Tobgay. BHUTAN’S PERVASIVE PHALLUS: IS DRUKPA KUNLEY REALLY RESPONSIBLE? Royal University of Bhutan.

³²Ibid

³³Ibid

³⁴Monson, Elizabeth L. 2015. Ethical Formation in the Works and Life 'Brug Smyon Kun Dga' Legs Pa. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. Pp.83- 107.
<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn3:HUL.InstRepos:23845460Terms>

Legend

One day, Drukpa Kunley dreamt that a woman dressed in a yellow skirt, and holding a flaming sword, said to him, 'Drukpa Kunley, it is time that you fulfilled the prophecy that foretold the conversion of the people of Bhutan, and the magical purification of that land.

In Bhutan you will establish a family which will serve the Drukpa Tradition to great advantage in the future. You must shoot an arrow to the south early in the morning as a harbinger of your coming.' So saying, she disappeared, and Kunley awoke. The Lama recognized this as a divine revelation of the Smoky Goddess. Early, the next morning he strung his bow and loosed a wailing arrow into the southern sky. The arrow landed upon the roof of the house belonging to the wealthy and devout highlander, Topa Tsewong, in Dramwokma in the district of Topa Silung' in Bhutan. The family ran outside fancying an earthquake until they found the arrow still quivering on the rooftop, and realized what had made the house shake. 'There is no need for black thoughts,' said Tsewong. 'This omen portends a son for us. Wash your hands and bring the arrow inside.' The girl wrapped it in silk, and taking it into the shrine room, placed it upon the altar.

Meanwhile, Drukpa Kunley was coming down from Nangkatse to look for his arrow. At Wodo Rock (between Phari and Paro) he found some travellers camped by the rock, and asked them if he could join them for the night. Before they slept that night, he heard them mutter, 'Have mercy upon us Lord Demon of Wodo! Before the Lama slept he said, 'May I myself be merciful!' In the middle of the night he was awakened by a fierce demon with his hair flying behind him in the wind. 'Who are you to talk about mercy?' demanded the demon. 'What do you have that is so special?'

'I have this!' replied the Lama, showing the demon his steel hard penis. 'What strange beast is this?' 'I will show you what kind of beast it is!' Kunley told him, and swung his Flaming Thunderbolt of Wisdom at him, hitting him in the mouth and smashing his teeth back into his head. The demon fled, but returned later in a peaceful frame of mind. The Lama explained the Teaching to him and imposed deterrent promises upon him. The demon was bound to the service of the Buddhas. Thereafter, the Demon of Wodo no longer harmed travellers.³⁵

There are many such stories of Drukpa Kunley fighting with the demons with his flaming thunderbolt of Wisdom and protecting the people.

Portrayal

Drukpa Kunley is usually depicted with a **bow, an arrow, and a dog**, like a hunter. In fact his arrow has a spiritual value as it helped him fulfil a famous prophecy foretelling his travel to Bhutan for the benefit of sentient beings.³⁶ He is considered to have great powers as a result of his **tantric practice**, powers that

³⁵ Keith Dowman, Sonam Paljor. The Divine Madman. The Sublime Life and Songs of -Drukpa Kunley. The Dawn Horse Press. Clearlake, California. ISBN: 0-9 13922-75-7. Pp.119-120

³⁶ Francoise Pommaret (CNRS, France) and Tsahi Tobgay. BHUTAN'S PERVASIVE PHALLUS: IS DRUKPA KUNLEY REALLY

he puts to use in humorous and outrageous ways, thereby forever imprinting himself into the hearts and minds of those who have intercourse with him in any way. The hundreds of **paintings of phalluses** (referred to as '*The Flaming Thunderbolt of Wisdom*') that adorn the **outer walls** of many **Bhutanese homes** have become indelibly associated with Drukpa Kunley, participating in the nexus of antinomian and outrageous tales of him that seem to be ubiquitously known across the country.³⁷

Oral Traditions and ritualistic practices.

The **Chime Lhakang**, the main temple dedicated to Drukpa Kunley in the Punakha Valley of central Bhutan has become world famous for barren women and their husbands who hope to conceive a child by spending one night on the temple grounds. They must receive a blessing in the form of a large wooden phallus considered to have been carved by Drukpa Kunley himself. The temple is said to be built by 'Brug pa Kun legs' brother, Ngag dbang Chos rgyal. This is the place where '*Brug pa Kun legs subdued the demoness Hema (He ma) of Rdo Kyong la, the most fearsome demoness in Bhutan. While fleeing from him, she transformed herself into a black dog. 'Brug pa Kun legs buried her underground and erected a black stupa over her to contain her. The stupa is still there.*' The main temple, which was built some time later, is now the site of various rituals surrounding **fertility**. The temple houses a large statue of Drukpa Kunley, some of his relics, the large wooden phallus he is said to have carved, his bow and arrows, and a small stupa he is said to have made.³⁸

People paint and hang phallic symbols on the house because it is believed that Lam Drukpa Kunley or Divine Madman, defeated the evil spirits and demons, and liberated people from their ignorance with his "thunderbolt of wisdom", which took the form of a phallus. In order to promote fertility, women may visit the monastery to receive fertility blessings from a monk, or have the monks perform prayers to promote fertility.³⁹

KOKOPELE/ KOKOPELLI

Introduction

Kokopelli, whose name was derived from Hopi Koko (god) and Pelli (desert robber fly), was a **fertility deity** worshiped by some Native American cultures from the southwestern United States, Mexico, and Canada. His earliest petroglyphs and paintings date back to **200 AD**⁴⁰ in which he is often portrayed as an anthropomorphic figure with a hump on his back, an erect phallus, playing a flute and dancing, and sometimes surrounded by snakes. The oral traditions play an

RESPONSIBLE? Royal University of Bhutan.

³⁷ Monson, Elizabeth L. 2015. Ethical Formation in the Works and Life 'Brug Smyon Kun Dga' Legs Pa. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. P. 375.

³⁸ Monson, Elizabeth L. 2015. Ethical Formation in the Works and Life 'Brug Smyon Kun Dga' Legs Pa. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. P. 455.

³⁹ Tshering Doma. Child Birth Rituals among Ngalongs (Western Bhutan). Department of Sociology, South Field College. PARIPEX - INDIAN JOURNAL OF RESEARCH. Volume : 4 | Issue : 5 | May 2015. ISSN - 2250-1991. P. 105.

⁴⁰ Young JV. (1990) Kokopelli Casanova of the Cliff Dwellers the Hunchbacked Flute Player. Filter Press, Palmer Lake, Colorado.

important role in knowing about Kokopelli.⁴¹

The story of Kokopele

At the time when Oraibi was first inhabited, the katcina Kokopele was living nearby with his grandmother. Within the village there dwelt a good-looking girl who was so vain that she rejected the advances of all the young men who sought to make her acquaintance. At last Kokopele confided to his grandmother that he meant to try his luck but his grandmother laughed at him because he was humpbacked and far homelier than many of the Oraibi boys.

Now Kokopele had noticed that every noon, soon after lunch, the girl was in the habit of going to a particular spot at the edge of the mesa to perform her natural functions. His first step was to dig a trench leading from his house to the exact spot which the girl was accustomed to visit. Then he cut and hollowed out a number of reeds, fashioned them into a continuous pipe, and laid it in the ditch. This done, he filled in the trench and smoothed it over so that the girl would notice nothing wrong when she came to her accustomed place.

Soon after noon the next day the girl came to the spot she generally frequented for such purposes and bent down to perform her office. Hardly had she finished then she felt something stirring under her, and enjoying the sensation, made no effort to investigate. It was the penis of Kokopele that she felt, for so cleverly had he arranged his hollow tube by inserting his organ into it.

After a few months, she found herself pregnant, but neither she nor any of the people in the village had the slightest idea of her lover's identity. One day, one of the men in the village announced a foot race of a special kind.

He made a speech saying, "We all know that an unmarried girl has had a baby here lately and we would like to know the man who is responsible. Let everyone go out and pick a bunch of pretty flowers for himself.

Then we will race while the girl sits here nursing her son and as each man finishes, let him hold out his bouquet and the baby will grasp the one that is held by his father."

When Kokopele heard the news he was afraid that he might lose his mistress, so he told his grandmother that he meant to compete with the others. She discouraged him again. Next day, however, poor Kokopele found himself entirely unable to cope with the other runners and he was still far from the finish when the winning racer arrived at the village and hurried to offer his flowers to the baby. Many attempted to offer the bouquet to the baby, but all attempts of others failed.

At last the badly tired Kokopele, far behind all the other runners, succeeded in reaching his goal. Hardly had he stretched forth his bouquet than the child grasped it eagerly. All were dumbfounded, but the race sponsor kept his word. The girl was too glad to take Katcina home, and she lived happily with Kokopele

⁴¹ Slifer D. (2007) Kokopelli The Magic, Mirth, and Mischief of an Ancient Symbol. Gibbs Smith, Layton, UT.

*who, being a kadcina, was a good provider and helped his fellow-villagers by bringing lots of rain.*⁴²

Portrayal

The classic portrayal of Kokopelli, is often endowed with a **hump and a phallus** in addition to the flute. However, it is the depiction of a sticklike flutist with an arched back, whose prototype is found on **Hohokam red-on-buff pottery** fragments from Southern Arizona dated about A.D. 1000, that has gained the most widespread use in today's popular culture. The reason for the predilection appears obvious: it is "safe", for it lacks the exposed genitals.⁴³

Regions and cultures

Ancient images of flute players appear on rocks from the four corners of the barren Southwest to the far corners of the world. In the realm of the mind, the flute player icon, like a sailor at sea, spreads his knowledge and seed. Variations of this archetypal figure came out not only to the Anasazi people but also to Hohokam, Africans, ancient Peruvians, Australian Aborigines, and many indigenous cultures.⁴⁴

Archaeological Findings

Ample of petroglyphs and desert intaglio of the flute player, Kokopelli are found. Some of them are in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico where the flute players resembling insects may illustrate ancient stories and creation myths about the first people coming up from the underworld and the warming of the earth to make corn grow. Another ancestral Pueblo petroglyph depicts a round human flute player and a flute playing animal with bird tracks and other symbols.⁴⁵ Yet another is a desert intaglio is found near Blythe, California, where a Figure sitting and playing a flute. The Sitting Stance of the Figure represents, waiting. Flute Playing means making a sound.⁴⁶

Beliefs and practices

His hunchback, in which he carries unborn children, and his erect phallus are symbols of fertility and virility. Kokopelli figurines and amulets were given to pregnant woman with the aim of improving the vigor of their male children.⁴⁷ Native American tribes that worshiped Kokopelli used to perform sexual acts as ceremonial rites.⁴⁸ When Spanish missionaries arrived in the region, these rituals faded away because they were considered obscene and noxious. Like several other fertility deities, he was also linked

⁴²MISCHA TITIEV. The Story of Kokopele.

<https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1525/aa.1939.41.1.02a00070>

⁴³Ekkehart Malotki. Kokopelli. The making of an icon. University of Nebraska Press. Lincoln and London. (2004). ISBN 0-8032-8295-8. P.1

⁴⁴Dennis Slifer. Kokopelli. The Magic, Mirth, and Mischief of an Ancient Symbol. Gibbs Smith Publisher. ISBN 13:978-1-4236-0174-6. (2007)

⁴⁵Ibid

⁴⁶Clifford C. Richey. Kokopelli: The Humpbacked Flute Player. May 2015.

⁴⁷Wellmann KF. (1970) Kokopelli of Indian paleology. Hunchbacked rain priest, hunting magician, and Don Juan of the old Southwest. JAMA. 212, 1678–1682

⁴⁸Titiev M. (1939). The story of Kokopele. Am Anthropol. 41, 91–98.

to rain, music, and plant and animal fertility.⁴⁹

INTERSEX FERTILITY DEITY

It is very unusual in modern times that fertility is associated with non-binary or transgender. The mythologies have discarded such notions and have associated fertility with genders that are neither male nor female. Amongst many such non-binary and intersex deities, Hapi is one of the deities associated with fertility.

HAPI

Introduction

The famous Greek Historian Herodotus summarized the importance of the river to the Egyptians by saying “Egypt is a gift of the Nile”. There are various myths associated with the Nile, including that the Nile is the gift of God and that its flood season begins with the appearance of the brightest star; when it overflows, it brings prosperity and fertility. The Egyptian calendar was based on the three seasons of the Nile: The flood, agriculture and Harvest. Nile means life, when it overflows it needs the level does not rise enough, drought and famine occur, to be controlled as if the water level rises too much, people lose their mud houses, and if the level does not rise enough, drought and famine may occur.⁵⁰

Although Hapi was worshipped by everyone in Egypt, he had no temples dedicated to him. Instead he was represented in the temples of the other gods, usually as an androgynous figure- a fat man with female breasts. The mystery that surrounded the origin of the Nile River was paralleled by the stories of Hapi’s life. According to one myth he was born in the underworld below the Aswan Falls, where the primeval waters of Nun flowed.

Sometimes Hapi was merged with other gods representing fertility, such as Osiris, in whose mythical cycle Nekhbet was involved. A version of Hapi merging with Sobek (crocodile God), etc.⁵¹

Literary Sources

Hapi was mentioned in the **Pyramid Texts of Unas** (“from Hep”) where he was to send the river into the underworld from certain caverns, where he was thought to have lived at the First Cataract. He was also mentioned in the Pyramid Texts as a destructive power, but one that worked for the pharaoh.⁵²

⁴⁹Wellmann KF. (1970) Kokopelli of Indian paleology. Hunchbacked rain priest, hunting magician, and Don Juan of the old Southwest. JAMA. 212, 1678–1682

⁵⁰Mustafa Marie. Egypt, the gift of the Nile. Egypt Today. Sun, 28 June 2020.

<https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/4/89062/Egypt-The-gift-of-the-Nile>

⁵¹ Marshal Cavendish. Gods, Goddesses and Mythology. Vol 5, Gorgons-Inanna. Marshal Cavendish Corporation. ISBN 0-7614-7564-8. Pp. 609-610.

⁵² Bohai Xu. The similarities between Hapi and Hebo. 16 June 2019.

Homage to thee, O Hapi, thou appears in this land, and thou comes in peace to make Egypt to live. Thou art the Hidden One, and the guide of the darkness on the day when it is thy pleasure to lead the same. Thou art the waterer of the fields which Ra has created, thou give life unto all animals, and thou make all the land to drink unceasingly as thou descendest on thy way from heaven.⁵³

Mythology

At a very early period he absorbed the attributes of Nun, the primeval watery mass from which Ra, the Sun-god, emerged on the first day of the creation; and as a natural result he was held the father of all beings and things, which were believed to be the results of his handiwork and his offspring. When we consider the great importance which the Nile possessed for Egypt and her inhabitants it is easy to understand how the Nile-god Hapi held a unique position among the gods of the country, and how he came to be regarded as a being as great as, if not greater than Ra himself.⁵⁴

As the role of Nile was so important for the Egyptians, they manifested and personified nature. Thus, they believed it was important for the Gods to control the river. The two main deities involved in organizing this process are Khnum and Hapi, according to legend. God Hapi, was one in control of the flood of the Nile.⁵⁵ The flood was commonly known as the "arrival of Hapi". Hapi was thought to come with the inundation with a retinue of crocodile gods and frog goddesses. A great flood was known as a 'large Hapi', whilst a low flood was a 'small Hapi'.⁵⁶

He had large female breasts because he was said to bring a rich and nourishing harvest. Due to his fertile nature he was sometimes considered the "father of the gods" and was considered to be a caring father who helped to maintain the balance of the cosmos, the world or universe regarded as an orderly, harmonious system. Some interpret that the man having breasts is normal when the man is muscular and the chest muscles give the impression of being fuller, firmer and outward and a situation like this may even appear when a man is hefty and the chest accumulates fat and becomes heavy.⁵⁷

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333736019>

⁵³ Bohai Xu. The similarities between Hapi and Hebo. 16 June 2019.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333736019>

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Mustafa Marie. Egypt, the gift of the Nile. Egypt Today. Sun, 28 June 2020.

<https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/4/89062/Egypt-The-gift-of-the-Nile>

⁵⁶ Bohai Xu. The similarities between Hapi and Hebo. 16 June 2019.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333736019>

⁵⁷ Ibid

Portrayal

Hapi was portrayed as a man with full breasts and belly, painted **green or blue**, wearing the false beard and symbolizing the fertility that the Nile gave Egypt. Sometimes the Nile god would have the lotus flower of Upper Egypt (Hap-Meht) and the papyrus of Lower Egypt (Hap-Reset) on his head.⁵⁸

In multiple scenes in different temples, such as **Karnak and Luxor** temples, Hapi can be seen with lotus and papyrus. This indicates the union of Upper Egypt, represented in its logo, the lotus flower and the lower represented in its logo, the papyrus.⁵⁹ As he appeared as a territorial marker, holding a tablet with the name and symbols of the nome, or province, of the god in whose temple he was placed. As a god of the sacred river, he wore a fisher's belt and a crown of aquatic flowers on his head, with an utchat, an "eye of Osiris" on his forehead; less commonly, Hapi was represented as a man with two goose heads looking in opposite directions.⁶⁰

Rituals

Hapi was one of the few Gods not completely banished by the heretical pharaoh Akhenaton (ruled 1379-1362 BCE), who considered him to be an incarnation of the only true God Aten.⁶¹

The cult of Hapi was mainly located at the first Cataract named Elephantine. The island of Elephantine stood at the border between Egypt and Nubia. Hapi's priests were involved in rituals to ensure the steady levels of flow required from the annual flood. At Elephantine the official nilometer, a measuring device, was carefully monitored to predict the level of the flood, and his priests must have been intimately concerned with its monitoring. During inundation, statues of Hapi were carried about through the towns and villages so that the people could honor and pray to him - it was a solemn occasion. During the later period, Egyptians conducted a sacrifice of a female to River Nile, every year when it was flooded. The flood would remain until a young female was thrown into it as a sacrifice to become the bride of the Nile god Hapi.⁶²

ANALYSIS

The analysis of every case study can be done by classifying them into groups of Linguistic (Macro & Micro), Structural, Psychological, Phylogenetic (Macro & Micro), Naturalistic and lastly, historical and comparative approaches as follows:

Approaches	Researched case-studies
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⁵⁸ Abdallah Gad. Water culture in Egypt. National Authority for Remote Sensing and Space Sciences, Egypt.

⁵⁹ Mustafa Marie. Egypt, the gift of the Nile. Egypt Today. Sun, 28 June 2020.

<https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/4/89062/Egypt-The-gift-of-the-Nile>

⁶⁰ Marshal Cavendish. Gods, Goddesses and Mythology. Vol 5, Gorgons-Inanna. Marshal Cavendish Corporation. ISBN 0-7614-7564-8. Pp. 609-610.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Bohai Xu. The similarities between Hapi and Hebo. 16 June 2019.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333736019>

Naturalistic Approach	Lajja Gauri, Artemis, Drukpa Kunley, Kokopelli & Hapi.
Structural Approach	Artemis, Drukpa Kunley & Hapi.
Psychological Approach	Lajja Gauri, Artemis, Drukpa Kunley, Kokopelli & Hapi.
Phylogenetical Approach	Macro- Lajja Gauri, Artemis, Drukpa Kunley & Hapi Micro- Lajja Gauri, Drukpa Kunley & Kokopelli
Linguistic Approach	Artemis & Kokopelli
Historical and Comparative Approaches	Artemis & Hapi.

Further, the following analysis brings out the case studies together around four patterns: a shared anatomical vocabulary, the coexistence of creation and destruction within single figures, fluidity of gender and a possibility of regional borrowing of genealogy. .

A Shared Anatomical Vocabulary

Across these five cultures euphemism is sparse or absent. Lajja Gauri's iconography depicts the vulva in birth-giving posture; Kokopelli is rarely shown without an erect phallus; Drukpa Kunley's "Flaming Thunderbolt of Wisdom" is painted openly on the outer walls of Bhutanese homes, functioning as a protector. Fertility, at its root, is a natural phenomenon, and each deity conveys that concern through iconography rather than through abstraction — Artemis through her role in childbirth, Hapi through the swelling and receding of the Nile, Lajja Gauri and Kokopelli through explicit sexual display. Cultures with scanty plausible direct contact with one another arrived at the same concept of displaying fertility, pointing towards shared instincts over coincidence.

Coexistence of Creation and Destruction in the same figure

Some of these deities are neither purely benevolent nor purely generative. Hapi both feeds and starves Egypt where a "large Hapi" brings abundance while an uncontrolled flood brings destruction and the colours used in the depiction of icon displays green for crops and blue for water and death. Artemis is patron of childbirth and is believed to help the labouring women, yet the same goddess could cause deadly disease in animals and was also known to be a deity of sudden death;

Drukpa Kunley's phallus doubles as weapon and blessing, turning him into Trickster and protector at once, while Kokopelli carries a comparable duality as both a hero ending the drought and mischief-making Trickster. Lajja Gauri sits closer to a pure Creator or Mother Deity archetype in her earliest form, however her assimilation into Parvati who holds both affectionate and fearsome attributes suggests the same duality. Across all five, the fertility cult treats creation and destruction as a single power expressing itself in two directions.

Gender as a Variable, Not a Constant

One significant pattern above irrespective of a deity's sex is that all figures perform the same cultic task of ensuring human and agricultural abundance. Hapi is one of the most effective case studies on this—a man with full female breasts, worshipped everywhere without a temple of his own, engraved instead in the shrines of other deities. The fundamental inference regarding this is that fertility cult does not function on the basis of a single gender, holding one gender above another implying that logic and rationality superseded rigid gendering which was later observed in the existing theological systems.

Possible borrowing of genealogy

The series of similarities also links these figures across regions with little or no contact. Lajja Gauri's posture closely echoes the Sumerian goddess Inanna, highlighting the possibility that the cult moved from Mesopotamia into India. Artemis shows a similar pattern: Diana in Rome, Astarte-Anath-Asherah in the Levant, Ma in Asia Minor, and Cybele in Phrygia are all treated as close parallels, with Cybele and Astarte fit under both a structural and a phylogenetic reading, while the Asia Minor connection adds a linguistic interlinkage between Astarte-Asherah and Artemis. The most evident case is of Hapi and the Chinese river-god Hebo. Both are associated with river, flood, and (in later periods) bride sacrifice — with the names Hapi/Hep and Hebo themselves showing a linguistic proximity. Drukpa Kunley's phallic and thunderbolt imagery traces backward in the same way, to the Shiva linga and to the Buddhist iconography of Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani, pointing towards transmission from Shaivite worship into Bhutanese practice.

These are mere possibilities that are drawn from iconographic and functional similarity, not textual or archaeological proof of contact. However, this existing evidence cannot rule out instances of convergence. The underlying point is that the symbolism of fertility cult was not arbitrary but it responded to concerns of the society about reproduction, flood and abundance.

This belief continues to exist in the modern world. A finer-grained pattern operates within single traditions as well. Lajja Gauri evolves regionally into Renuka Devi in Maharashtra and Pochamma in Andhra and Parvati in Hinduism. Drukpa Kunley's textual history shows a comparable drift — earlier represented as sober and intellectual, while later Namthar portrays him into the wild, crazy-wisdom trickster now dominant in popular memory. Kokopelli's own name is a linguistic composite, drawn from Hopi *koko* (god) and *pell*i (desert robber fly).

3. CONCLUSION

Myths are reflections of human aspirations and hopes. The mythology related to fertility and reproduction have representations in the form of deities. Human society continues to face the problem of fertility and reproduction in different cultures, even today. Worshipping these deities is widely practiced till date in transmitted forms of deities. The transition of Artemis from a deity of forest to fertility in Ephesus, further to an avatar of Virgin Mary speaks volumes of people's adaptability of the forms of deities as per their beliefs. The continuity of these cults in living ritual can be established through barren women visiting the Chime Lhakhang in Bhutan, Lajjagauri being worshipped in Gujarat and Maharashtra, phallic imagery still painted on Bhutanese homes. Thus, the mythological dimension of fertility cult is a living structure

still doing cultural work in the twenty-first century. These beliefs infuse hope among the believers and also is a source of collective worship, celebrations and joy of Life.

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Images



Lajjagauri



Artemis



Kokopelli



Drukpa Kunley



Hapi