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The role of mythology as a cultural identity and a cultural heritage: the case of phrygian myhtology

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Abstract

Human beings are meaning-seeking creatures. We, as human beings, have also imagination faculty that enables us to think and by means of these characteristics, religions and mythologies have been emerged on the earth stage since the early dates of history. So, many works of the mankind based on mythological and religious backgrounds. Within this context, the mythology has a key role in civilization and cultural movements throughout the history. The awareness of Phrygia is remarkably high in all over the world despite of being survived only two centuries (725-695/675 BCE) in Asia Minor. It owes its awareness to its history, geography and geopolitical position and mythology. In our study, we would like to state the role of mythology as a cultural identity through the samples of the Phrygian mythology

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1. Introduction

Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned: the dynamics of the faith are the dynamics of the man's ultimate concern. Unlike the other creatures, man has spiritual concerns- cognitive, aesthetic, social, and political (Tillich, 1958:1-3). Since the early days of the history, there has been a relation between faith and mankind. The emergence of the myths is the reflections of the faiths of the humans. Therefore, the history of civilizations associates with mainly

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the history of religions. Humans interpret their world, their purpose, and their place in the world by means of myth (Cave, 1993:68). René Girard utters this reality and said that religiosity creates all human culture (Girard, 2010:123).

Human beings are meaning seeking creatures. This peculiarity of the humans beings makes them mythmakers. We can see the first traces of the myths in the early ages of the history. For instance, the findings found at the Neanderthal graves indicate that they believe a similar life to their own life after passing away. (Armstrong, 2005:2). A human world without myths shouldn't be imaginable. Oliver Sacks underlines this fact in his sentences: "if we wish to know a man, we ask "what is his story, his real, inmost story?", for each of us is a biography, a story. Each of us is a singular narrative (Sacks, 1985: 12).

Another peculiar characteristics of the human mind is its ability to have ideas and experiences that we can't identify rationally. We have imagination facility. By means of this skill, we can think of something that is not present. This imagination is the faculty that produces religion and mythology (Armstrong, 2005:2). We should have been lost if we don't have myths. Many cultural richness have been narrating from generation to generation through the myths. The fables, myths, legends, folk tales are the collective outputs. They have been formed by the conscious and unconscious interactions. Human beings always constitute "superior power-powers" in his mind and determine his faiths, thoughts, behaviour and attitudes in the direction of these superior powers. These superior powers that have metaphysical power are engraved in the mind of people in different types in the historical process. Before the emergence of the monotheistic religions, human beings believe goddesses of love, gods of war, gods of sea, sun and ext (Gündüz, 1998:17). So, every phase of the human race, we observe myths. And there are many information hidden in these myths whether real or unreal but they reveal some clues related with their ages.

Cultural identity generally associates with the myths. Nearly all of the civilizations have their own mythologies. In the Western culture, Homeros is the starting point of their cultural movement (Calasso, 2001:12). After the Mediaeval Age, during the years of Renaissance, Reform and Humanism years, the West turned their face towards the Ancient Period and looked for some reference guide. And the mythological sources were waiting for them.

2. Phrygia

Anatolia (Asia Minor) has been the cradle of civilizations throughout the world. It hosted many civilizations in its prehistoric and historic times from Hittites to Phrygians, Roman Empire to the Byzantines, Seljukians to the Ottoman Empire. Phrygia, one of the noteworthy kingdom of the Asia Minor, known as throughout the world by means of its mythological figures mainly King Midas, Marsyas and the others. Phrygia as one of the important kingdom of the first half of the 1st millennium B.C. was located in west-central Anatolia. By means of its geopolitical position, Phrygia created an important role for the civilization movement from East to West.

They settled in ancient Anatolia in the first half of the first millennium BCE (725-695-675 BC). Their settlement was around west central Anatolia. The borders of the Phrygians was continuously changed as they exposed to the invasion and hegemony of Cimmerians, Lydians, Persians and this situation went on during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods times (Ramsay, 1960: 163).

Heredotos claims that Phrygians were the most ancient nation (Heredotos, II: 2). Some ancient writers such as, Thucydides, Xenophon, Strabon, Plinius and Stephanus Byzantinus stated that they came from Thrace. In another argument, they were the native Anatolian fugitives who went to Thrace then after the Illyrian and Macedonian oppressions they had to leave Thrace and came back to Anatolia (Gilmore, 1895: 9).

Asia Minor isn't only a bridge between East and West. Its contribution is more broader than a bridge. The art, mind and religion of the East has been transported to West through the Asia Minor. Phrygia in this context, contributed a lot to the development of the Eastern Mediterranean and Hellen Civilization (Petrova, 1995:49). The relation between the Greeks and the Phrygians is so close that the Phrygians are called as "The Eastern Greeks" (Perrot and Chipiez, 1892:4).

The statement of Mr. Akurgal's on Phrygia summarize the importance Phrygia in history: "Phrygia had a short but a glorious life" (Akurgal, 1961:119). Phrygia has a close relation with Greece and Thrace in the northern side, Syria and Cyprus in the southern side and Assyrians and Urartians in the eastern side. Its role look like a bridge between the cradle of civilizations, Mesopotomia and Egypt to Greece. The most meaningful interaction point between East and West (Crawford, 1922:257).

The civilizations are strictly attached to the geography (Braudel, 1992: 104). Geography, the relations of land and

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