

**Coexistence of the
Living and the Dead**

COEXISTENCE OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

LA COEXISTENCIA DE LOS VIVOS Y LOS MUERTOS

ABSTRACT

The current study has been conducted with two interrelated objectives that are both directly rooted in one unique reason: 1- raison d'être of burial in the floor of Neolithic monuments, 2- critical assessment of the idea of life after death in another world focusing on the burials in Paleolithic to Neolithic eras. In many of the sites of Neolithic era, the tradition of burial under the floor of monuments has taken form that somehow can show the coexistence of the living and the dead. On the one hand, generalization of the burial tradition and beliefs of primitive societies and applying them to the belief systems of some of the contemporary societies based on their religious perspective of the life after death and on the other hand, inattention to its specific meaning and application, have caused the reader to misunderstand this burial tradition and ritual. Then, the author believes that the existing beliefs and culture regarding death are based on the fear of death as well as the act of dying and the dead person. Burying the dead person's properties with him/her is one of the manifestations of fear of death phenomenon and act of dying. It is this very fear indeed that has led to the coexistence of the living and the dead in the form of the burial of the dead beneath the floor of buildings. Finally, this fear has taken shape in various forms in view of the culture and tradition of every society in that juncture and the following eras. The current study has been conducted based on a library, descriptive and analytic method.

KEY WORDS: Belief in the Life after Death, Primitive Society, Neolithic, Burial, Fear

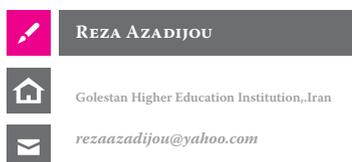
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RESUMEN

El presente estudio se ha llevado a cabo con dos objetivos interrelacionados que están directamente arraigados en una única razón: 1- razón de ser del entierro en el suelo de los monumentos neolíticos, 2- evaluación crítica de la idea de la vida después de la muerte en otro mundo centrándose en los entierros en el Paleolítico a las eras neolíticas. En muchos de los sitios de la era neolítica, la tradición del entierro bajo el piso de monumentos ha tomado la forma que de alguna manera puede mostrar la coexistencia de los vivos y los muertos. Por un lado, la generalización de la tradición y creencias funerarias de las sociedades primitivas y su aplicación a los sistemas de creencias de algunas sociedades contemporáneas basadas en su perspectiva religiosa de la vida después de la muerte y, por otro lado, la falta de atención a su significado específico y aplicación, han causado que el lector malinterprete esta tradición y ritual de entierro. Entonces, el autor cree que las creencias y la cultura existentes con respecto a la muerte se basan en el miedo a la muerte, así como en el acto de morir y la persona muerta. Enterrar las propiedades de la persona muerta con él / ella es una de las manifestaciones del fenómeno de miedo a la muerte y el acto de morir. Es precisamente este miedo el que ha llevado a la coexistencia de vivos y muertos en la forma del entierro de los muertos bajo el piso de los edificios. Finalmente, este miedo se ha concretado en diversas formas en vista de la cultura y la tradición de cada sociedad en esa coyuntura y en las siguientes eras. El presente estudio se ha realizado en base a una biblioteca, método descriptivo y analítico.

PALABRAS CLAVE: creencia en la vida después de la muerte, sociedad primitiva, neolítico, entierro, miedo

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1. INTRODUCTION

The present study is focused on the perspective of ancient man in primitive societies on life and death. Given the fact that one of the most important issues in the universe is the phenomenon of death and act of dying, human being in all historical eras has always sought to resist the phenomenon of death and act of dying and prevent its emergence. In every epoch of human life, some efforts have often been made in order to show this confrontation with death in various forms. The current essay analyzes the perspective of the ancient man in order to know the thought resulted from the fear of the phenomenon of death and act of dying. The chosen era in this study due to the existing evidences is the first burials in Paleolithic and Neolithic ages. These evidences include the objects that have been buried with the corpses beneath the floor of buildings with residential, religious or other applications. Ancient man has struggled to show his fear of death in burial rituals. Showing this fear is not for something or someone rather it is just for satisfaction of oneself before the phenomenon of death. In the current essay, various examples of the concept of fear in the environmental perception have been provided for the better understanding of the research objective.

BACKGROUND

1- Personal decorations due to their high value both in view of their quantity and because of the fact that their construction required a continuous hard work with primitive tools are sign of value store or indeed wealth and if we suppose an individual has had value and social stature in the daily life, then having these decorations along has been a sign of the personal effort for keeping his own supremacy in otherworld life (Ahmad Chiachi, 1996: 105).

2- Concentration of permanent nuclear communities inside or near places that have encompassed the environmental resources as compared to the weak sense of land ownership and powerful sense of land ownership as the result of which protection of a small but vital region turned to one of the key group objectives. It is in this environmental-social context that burial of individuals inside personal houses was a common practice in Neolithic Age. In other words, without any need to an official document or contract, existence of ancestors was generally declared as a document that endorsed one's ownership of a certain land or region (Abbas Alizade, 1996: 7).

3- Gifts and objects that were prepared for burial along with the dead one. Before setting these inside the grave they were exhibited to the people around the grave. Usually, dead ones from royal dynasty were buried along with valuable objects the evidences of which have been acquired through the excavations of the grave of Nimrud the Assyrian Queen (Harrak, 1990: 11).

4- In all communities before burial, the corpse is prepared in certain ways. The first burials date back to homo sapiens. Archaeological evidences show that these primitive groups decorated the dead one with Ocher that seems to have been the symbol of their possible belief in life after death (Rahmatullah Abbasi, 2009: 8).

5- In this era (almost 8000 years before Christ), the dead ones were buried beneath the floor of the residential places. Belief in ghosts, life after death, putting gifts inside the graves and overlaying the corpse with Ocher are the striking features of the burial traditions. These features generally reveal the ritual aspect of the burial of dead ones and belief in unknowns (Hassan Talaei, 2002: 175).

6- The vision of people of ancient Mesopotamia regarding death and the dead has been reflected on their beliefs in soul and life after death. For the people of ancient Mesopotamia there was neither a Day of Judgement nor a resurrection nor a paradise nor a hell. Lack of such beliefs overshadowed the funeral. They believed that human body has been created by Gods out of the mud and after the departure of soul it should be put into the dust in order to let it turn to dust again and it is soul that

finds her way to the lower world through the grave (Bottero, 2001: 106).

7- The state of corpses inside the graves in Neolithic era might remind us the embryonic state of human being. Perhaps it was due to the specific idea of the worlds of life and death in ancient times, according to which these two worlds follow each other, that the corpses should lie in the grave on their side with legs gathered around the stomach as the grave serves as a womb inside of which the corpse is conceived for a new creation. This may be just symbolic. This notion of man in prehistoric age reveals the necessity of preservation of corpses and their comfort inside the grave after death. As to the corpses in lying or sitting modes and other modes we should suppose that only preservation of the corpse for the otherworld is of importance. Anyway, whether such traditions exist or not both alternatives are highly significant for research (Ahmad Chaychi, 1996: 98).

8- Provisions of the dead person in his travel to the lower world included a bowl of roasted meat, fish, soda, date and yogurt that were all set inside the grave in order to facilitate the travel for the dead one. Inside the grave a pair of sandals or even for the king a carriage was set inside the grave in order to facilitate the travel. The provisions and objects inside the grave were indeed gifts for the gods of lower world (Hassan Akbari and Morteza Hisari, 2005: 85).

RESEARCH THEORETICAL PRINCIPLES

From his very early stages of evolution onwards mankind has found various visions of his surrounding world. The five senses of hearing, taste, sight, touch and smell can help us to understand the environment. Environmental perception is a perception that comes about upon the understanding of environment and can appear in the form of environmental reaction versus environmental action. From surrounding environment with all the existing realities certain actions occur that in view of human knowledge of the sense can be experience giving and to be followed by material and spiritual reactions as regards man himself and the environment.

In various eras these senses had had conscious and unconscious structure in view of the prioritized requirements of the time. For example, application of such senses as hearing

and touch has had wider use as compared to taste. As time went by and following various conditions, man reached higher power in the light of these senses as compared to the past in the surrounding environment.

According to McLuhan, in the hierarchical culture there is a preference among the senses. The prehistoric people perceived the world through five sense specifically the sense of hearing.

Sense of fear is the result of inattention or lack of knowledge of the totality of senses. According another interpretation, when man has a correct understanding of an issue or a phenomenon or a sense he cannot face the reality and this causes fear of the essential reality; a fear that is associated with the lack of knowledge of anything. Lack of knowledge as the result of the fear is one of the reasons that can provoke the perceptions and imaginations.

Given the mode of thought of burial in early societies, there has been special notions and imaginations as regards death. These notions have their roots in the lack of knowledge that is the result of the fear. In early societies, a specific percent of the death was natural away from personal and social biases. For example, suppose that in early societies people in a completely sudden fashion and without the consciousness of every individual encounter their death and this causes the following question to be raised:

1- When an individual sees another man's death, due to which the body stops working, how does s/he feel?

2- Can a living person have any feeling for a dead person in a determinate fashion?

3- Can repetition of seeing the act of dying bring about experience and understanding (death-consciousness) for one or turn him to a consciously evolved person?

Mankind has undergone through all stages of life including tools, form of life, discoveries and the like, without any presupposition or self-consciousness, because these acts have been in primitive forms and emerged in the form of instinctual self-consciousness that is sometimes associated with unconsciousness.

Point: In some conditions, self-consciousness and unconsciousness have distinct border.

- One can say that most part of beings regardless of their understanding of the reason for their fear have fears and this can be only with not repeating the bitter experience of others based on having the sufficient understanding of the bitter experience.

- The objective is stated in the following proverb: "fear is the biggest experience of man, an experience that has affected the whole life of mankind".

- Burial and its related traditions have undergone through numerous transformations from various vital and cultural aspects since the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras. It has been affected by this initial fear that has its own roots in the lack of knowledge of death and senses.

- To know the past human generations and early societies we can neither put ourselves in their conditions nor we can think like them and decide. It needs to be reminded that one should not make decisions for the ancient man (unfortunately in many research conclusions this is the procedure that is taken).

There are certain ways for better knowing of ancient man and nearing ourselves to understanding their ideas and beliefs and it is understanding every individual's personal existence. (When we speak of the existence itself we mean that only existence is significant not anything else including material and spiritual affairs that despite their importance are not taken into account in this context). Understanding personal existence is done without taking the early experience into account and only via senses that have shaped the actions of ancient man. For senses are the very basis of human experiences. It is senses that should be taken into account as regards the early times. Comparison is a means for understanding these senses.

Comparison causes man to reach a dimensional perspective which can be described as follows:

The past and present scholars are of the belief that people of early societies due to their burial traditions believe in life after death.

According to the current author, this is a view from outside in the sense that the scholars are of the belief that ancient man has had such a view. However, if the ancient man himself had such a belief and intention? This includes the internal dimension. Given the type of burial and knowledge of the personal existence itself we can near ourselves to the belief and thought of ancient man himself and the burial traditions and this can be defined as internal dimension. The objective of archaeologists and scholars and understanding the thought of ancient man for revision of the pattern of social, political, religious and economic patterns of ancient man. Combination of this ideology with the intellectual perspective of contemporary man will not result in a correct conclusion.

- Both external and internal dimensions are defined in the following ways:

1- Internal dimension: in this dimension given the manifestation of actions of ancient man based sensory knowledge we understand his thought and provide intellectual evidences that serve as a basis for its knowledge and analyze it and conclude.

2- External dimension: in this dimension we express our view regarding the actions of ancient man without involving the thoughts of ancient man that have been reflected in his actions and thus we generalize our own mindset to the ancient man.

Note: In both dimensions the probability of inclusion of contemporary beliefs is high because the perspective of contemporary scholar has taken form based on modern beliefs. To reach a correct standpoint one should prevent this ideological perspective.

- Given the archaeological evidences and documents, primitive man did not have a perfect notion of act of dying and death and in fact his lack of knowledge and understanding of death on his behalf has been sensed in a way that dying is not in the sense of not being in the life and not existing.

Note: this type of belief (life after death) has existed in many of world religions and continues to exist even today. It has been propounded due to the lack of a correct notion of death and act of dying in early human societies in various forms.

Ancient man could have had a specific feeling towards the act of dying given the frequent experience of seeing the act of dying or killing the fellow man. It is this feeling that has affected the notion of the living regarding the dead person and burial rituals. This is the sense of fear of death and escaping the act of dying and the dead that is reflected in the fear of resurrection of the dead.

Reflection of the fear of the phenomenon of death and act of dying placing objects inside the grave

Reflection of fear of the resurrection of the dead person its preservation and coexistence of the living with the dead

Note: the sense of fear of death phenomenon and act of dying exists for every human individual but the fear of the dead person exists not for all human persons and everyone defines his own stance as regards the dead according to his own beliefs. For example, Eyrians who live based on the lithic life style and reside in the south east Australia around Eyrie Lack have the following beliefs regarding burial: (Freud, 1972: 74)

- 1- Death is due to the diabolic forces and their conspiracies.
- 2- If the dead comes to the dreams of the relatives the latter should take food to the dead's grave in order to free themselves from the curse of the ghosts.
- 3- In winter they set fire on the graves of the dead in order to keep them warm and not to get cold.

According to archaeological evidences that have been found through excavations in graveyards throughout the world including Chay Unu and Chatal Hoyk in Turkey and Zagheh in Iran, graves are located in life areas and exactly beneath the floor of the buildings with residential and religious applications. These burials have their specific conditions including the structure of graves (hole-like or etc) and also conduction of rituals like overlaying the corpse with Ocher mud or setting various objects beside the dead or the mode of corpse (in gathered or semi-gathered form). These traditions have been repeated in various places and in the form of burial ri-

tuals in the light of the beliefs of every society and in various forms.

Archaeologists has stated that such qualities as the existence of objects beside the dead and the state of the corpse inside the grave and the conditions of their preservation indicate people's belief of the life after the death in the new world. In other words, the person remains alive and the soul continues its eternal life. But in fact as it has been stated earlier, this is the theory of scholars of the burial in ancient times and we should ask if this is really the same view that has been held by the ancient living man regarding burial?

Surely, ancient man did not have the same view of the dead person that is today shared by many people across the world upon religious grounds. For the knowledge of such view requires one to have a notion of soul and the definitions that have been offered by the religious men of the immaterial promises. In the contemporary era there societies that do not believe in soul and this has caused them not to believe in the world after death. In this simple way we can recognize that the Paleolithic and Neolithic man with such burial methods did not have a knowledge of soul and admittedly he did not have any notion of soul and trans-physical issues.

Rather his notion of death and act of dying has taken shape based on his fear and personal imaginations of dead person. The ancient man believed that the dead person will rise again after death in a new world and will continue his life in spiritual fashion. Indeed, ancient man just merely knew the material world where he lived.

The ways through which a living person can have connection with the dead are the following:

- 1- Thinking of the dead person: there is a mental relation between the dead and living through thinking due to various reasons including fear, emotional ties, family ties, friendship ties, ethnic ties and so on and so forth.
- 2- Dreaming: the only unconscious relation that a living person can establish (for every reason whether fear or any other reason) with the dead person is in dream. This

relation has been experienced with every human individual.

Note: Dreaming is a distinct category and is a subject of difference of opinions. In the current research we only discuss dreaming phenomenon and we do not intend to analyze it.

Dreaming is an objective reality and every human individual has an experience in this regard and we can state that dreaming is an essential reality. Dreaming is an incomprehensible phenomenon for the ancient man. Even for many contemporary human individuals lack of knowledge as to dreaming can bring about baseless notions and hallucinations like the early conditions of social life.

CONCLUSION.

Fear includes various outcomes resulted from it including love, affection, emotional tie and the like. For example, love is an instinct that is associated with affection. Affection for every entity comes about when an emotional bond and dependency exists and the latter is itself based on the fear of losing someone. Then fear is the main reason for every sense and the definition of fear affects the senses.

According to the intellectual vision that has been pursued in the current research the following ideas can be expressed:

1- Fear of the dead has caused a coexistence comes about. It is this coexistence that substantiates the burial and preservation of the dead. Coexistence is the best way for overcoming the fear. Man has acquired this stance via life experience.

Note: burying the corpses beneath the floor of the building with residential and religious applications is one of the beliefs of the ancient man. One can say that preservation of the dead person is in one sense an indication of the belief in possible resurrection of the dead person in coming seconds.

2- Placing objects beside the corpses has also been done upon the fear of death phenomenon and the act of dying.

2-1- Ancient man was not surely seeking to convey any meaning or a symbol via this method of burial rather he sought to satisfy his sensory instincts that had created such a

feeling in the ancient man towards the dead person.

2-2- Even if the ancient man had observed certain etiquettes for burial he did indeed believe in a bilateral tie between the dead person and the living which was both in the interest of the dead and the living.

2-2-1- This tie was in the interest of the dead because it prepared the ground for the resurrection of the dead person.

2-2-2- It was in the interest of the living because it brought about a sense of peace.

2-3- As it was mentioned in this research, feeling is an undeniable reality for every human individual and it exists in all living beings. A being has weaker feeling while the other enjoys a stronger feeling and this sensory quantity is resulted from the knowledge and understanding and intelligence.

2-4- Placing objects beside the corpse in some graves is an expression of personal sense of ownership in the sense that the objects that have been placed inside the grave will continue to belong to the dead person even after his death. This is also an indication of the fear of the anger and curse of the dead.

2-5- In some graves some objects have ornamental application in order to prevent from the death phenomenon and the sense of peace of the dead person after his death.

2-6- In fact the early thought of death is based on the fear of death phenomenon and the dead person is a reflection of the death while the living man fears of death phenomenon, act of dying and the dead person.

3- Due to lack of comprehensive sensory knowledge of the environment man cannot have a dependable understanding of death although he can have a sense of livingness. For man has surely touched the sense of birth and creation. Creation and birth have temporal duration in the sense that it is a gradual process and it cannot occur in an instant fashion. There should be copulation through which a fetus is conceived in mother's womb and there is a 9 months long waiting that finally results in birth.

3-1- The ancient man's notion of birth has provided him with a view according to which he seems himself obliged not only fear the dead rather to prepare the ground for its resurrection and keep it satisfied in order to evade its rage. It is for this reason that in some graves we see scenes that depict a childbirth. E.g.

3-1-1- Placing the corpse in the grave in the form of a fetus that is an expression of the consecutive stages of death and returning to mother womb. This is a familiarization process that can be seen in some cultures in order to better understand the death and help the people to have a notion of resurrection.

3-1-2- Preservation with the Ocher mud is a symbol of connection with the mother womb and death and a means for overcoming the fear of death.

3-1-3- The bodily form of the graves in circle like the mother womb during pregnancy.

3-2- But the dead person can never return to this world and this is in contradiction with the notions, imaginations and feelings of ancient man and caused a type of value conflicts in his ideas and his fear of them. Because this is also a sign of lack of knowledge of the death. The views explained are in fact the early vision of the burial of primitive societies and with repetition this has been reproduced in various forms as a standard view. Insofar as it has been presented in various ideological and cultural forms.

The formation of a belief in various forms changes it. Insofar as the initial meaning of an notion would change while the secondary meaning stands in contradiction with the initial meaning. The author believes that many beliefs have transformed and evolved into various forms due to the cultural expansion.



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