

The Plague in *Atra-Hasis and the Flood*

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Abstract

This article deals with the archetype of the plague in a Babylon story of a hero. Atra-Hasis, The Flood. This article uses the archetype theory of plague, and for its method, this article is a qualitative research design. This research found that first, the archetype of plague is common stories in many ancient peoples. Second, the archetype of plague deals with the god's punishment to human beings. Third, there is a human hero, Atra-Hasis who saves this world.

Keywords: *plague, archetype, hero*

A. Introduction

The outbreak of Covid-19 Pandemic to this world makes people aware that this planet is small. People try to fight the virus as the plague, hand in hand to show that the nations are in unity. The plagues occur times by time in the history of mankind. At the literary works, the story of *Oedipus Rex* in the old Greek shows the people of Thebe suffers the plague without mentioning specific name that kills many people. In the book *Exodus* chapter 7 up to 11, the plagues kills the Egyptians in form of the appearances of amphibians, mosquitos, flies, cholera, grasshoppers, etc. Both stories that are shown in *Oedipus Rex* as well in

book of *Exodus* are the archetypal ideas of how people suffer the plagues and get killed because of the appearances of the plagues.

The archetype of the plagues in the two stories shows that the plagues come to human beings as God's punishment to the unbelievers or the sinners. The punishment on the sinners is reflected in *Oedipus Rex* as it happens for god's anger to the Thebans who do great sin that is the existence of adultery without their awareness. In book *Exodus*, the main reason of God's punishment to the Egyptians by giving them many forms of plague is that the Egyptians still insist to enslave the Jews. Moses asks the king Pharaoh to free the Jews

from the fierce slavery, but as the Pharaoh still imposes the slavery, God of Moses helps the Jews. God of Moses sends plague in many forms.

By understanding the two stories, it can be said that the plague deals with God's interference in beating the sinners and unbelievers. In short, God (god) punishes human beings for what they do is against the will of God. The similarity of stories that has the message of God's punishment becomes a pattern on sources of stories around the world, and this pattern is called as archetype. Archetype is defined as a collective unconsciousness of universal portrayal of the past generations (Gary, 2005). From the definition, it can be said that archetype is related to inheritance that is passed from older generation to the new ones. It becomes a pattern that occurs again or reoccurs to the next generations so that they can take lesson from the symbol or motif in literature, art, or mythology.

The study of archetype is related to the idea of a psychoanalysis, Jung who emphasizes that the archetype occurs

as a pattern of reduplication and reinvention in many forms of culture. The two stories mentioned above have shown that God interferences as the wrongdoings happen, as it also happens in the story that is going to be analyzed, *Atra-Hasis and The Flood*. This old story about the plague also indicates that the problems of the existence of plague have become a thing that needs to be understood by people, therefore the plague occurs in literary works for literary works reflect the society. Related to this issue, therefore, this article tries to analyze how the ancient civilization in Babylonia portrays the plague and how the view is related to deeds of god(s).

B. Research Methods

This research is a qualitative research that means this research is fully related to the search and analyzing the data by using explanation by using words not by using numbers. This article uses the data taken from the book *Atra-Hasis: Babylonian Story of the Flood*: This Babylonian story that was translated from the ancient Babylonia by W.G

Lambert and AR. Millard. This edition was published by Oxford University Press in 1969.

This edition is actually a drama from in which the data are in form of dialogues among the characters as this form is common as well in the old Greek. The books consist of three parts and the first book that deals with the plague is discussed. The other parts deal with the famine and drought, and the third is about the flood is out of the discussion of this article.

C. Results and Discussion

This article finds that the story of *Atra-Hasis and the Flood* is older than the two books that are mentioned in this article, those are *Oedipus Rex* and the book of *Exdous* in the Old Testament or the Jewsih Tanakh. The book of *Oedipus Rex* was composed around the 5th century BC, while the earliest version of the book of *Exodus* was composed in the 6th century BC, while Abramowitz (1994) states that the story of *Atra-Hasis and the Flood* started to appear in the 18th century BC. This finding shows form the point of view of archetype that human

beings have tried to understand the problem of plague and interpret it through literary works from the very old tradition.

Archetypal concept sees that old generations pass the idea of plague from one generation to the next generations by stressing two teachings, the ways to answer the phenomena and as moral lessons (Russel, 1984). The existence of plague in societies needs to be understood by giving explanation, what it is beyond the plague. Human beings are thinking animals that want to know the meaning of a phenomenon. The ancient story that was produced three thousand years before today people show that they have tried to understand it.

From one to another or other similar stories of the people before Christ, people have already tried to the plague by giving reasons as they live in certain millennium. The spirit of time shows that they live in unscientific society, and this gives impact on how they perceive it.

This article also finds that the plague in *Atra-Hasis and the Flood* story is related to the idea it deals the

God's punishment to people who do things that make God feel angry. The idea is also the archetypal idea of *Oedipus Rex* and the book of *Exodus*. The three books share the same archetype that God (gods) punish people who make God feel angry. The plague is the consequence that people must take after they make God (gods) angry. If it is seen from the Russian literary critic, like Viktor Shklovsky (Carter, 2006), it can be understood that the three stories have similar archetype, the God that punishes people for they make things that are not proper in the sight of God, on other words it deals with the sin. In Shklovsky' word the similarity is called as *fabula*, and how theeach story is told differently, it is called as *suzhet*. The *suzhet* in the story of *Oedipus Rex* is related to the sins committed by Oedipus, killing own his father and marrying his own mother even though without his awareness. The killing of the father and marrying the mother are the two things that become motifs of God's anger and make the Thebans have got the plague.

The *suzhet* or the motif on the God's anger that makes the Egyptians get punished in many plagues such as the coming of mosquitos, grasshoppers, flies, disease and the change of water into blood, is that because the Pharaoh as the leader of the Egyptians enslaves the Jews, the chosen people according to the Jewish faith. God considers what the Egyptians do to the Jewish people is a sin so that the plague.

While in the story of *Atra-Hasis* and the Flood, gods feel angry to the human beings for they are disturbing the time for god's sleep. The human beings are too many, and their sound annoys the happiness of gods. The quotation below shows the idea:

352: twelve hundred years (and have not passed)

353: (when the land extended) and people multiplied

The quotation shows that gods feel that human beings are too numerous in this earth. This condition does not make them feel happy, too many human beings that live in this world make gods feel that this earth is unpleasant anymore.

354: (The land) was bellowing (like a bull)

355: the god got disturbed (with their uproar)

356: (Enlil heard) their noise

357: (and addressed) the great god

358: The noise of mankind (has become too intense for me)

359: *with their uproar) I am deprived of sleep

360: Let them be plague

The quotation above shows that gods, especially one god namely Enlil feels that human beings are the problems for gods. Though, gods create them from clay, and gods hope they can work well to please gods, but in fact, their numbers are always increasing, and this gives consequence that human beings disturb the times for gods to take a rest or sleep. Gods feel angry with human beings whom they consider make sin. The plague is sent by gods to reduce the amount of human beings. By reducing the amount of human beings, gods will have more time to live peacefully without hearing the sound pollution. Gods do not want to have sound pollution. Sound pollution threatens gods.

The plague is not mentioned in the story. But, like many people at the time, they usually refer to cholera like what happen in the book of *exodus* as well. In the story of *Atra-Hasis*, the first punishment is just a way to reduce human beings not to eliminate them. It is based on the purpose that the existence of human beings is need by the Babylonian gods to serve the gods.

In fact, after human beings then increase again. gods send them famine and drought and the last is the big flood, but the two topics in the tablets two and three is not the object of this article. *Atra-Hasis*, himself is super hero and a human being that saves human beings form the big flood by making a very big ship.

The archetype of the plague in *the Atra-Hasis and the Flood* story shows a very typical concept of the appearance of the plague in the old stories before Christ that God sends plague as way from God to punishes human beings. And interestingly that human beings try to stop the plague by making good deeds. The good deed is done as a way to please gods

in order to stop the disaster. The following quotation shows the idea:

380: But seek the door of Nantara
381: And bring baked (a loaf) in front of him
382: The offering of sesame-meal maybe pleasing Him.

The quotation shows that human beings always try to understand on how to make the plague stop. Through the priest that can communicate with gods, human beings try to make their sins redeemed. They do not want to blame gods who send this plague and take the lives of their beloved people, but they try to come back to God(s)

Finally, Atra-Hasis, the good man, the hero of human beings saves human beings to fight the plague by giving offering to god(s). He does it after being informed by the priest of the Babylonia. The way Atra-Hasis saves human beings can be seen in the quotation below:

385: Atra-Hasis received the command
386: and gathered the older to his gate.
387: Atra-Hasis opened his mouth (and prayed)

The quotation above shows that Atra-Hasis is the hero that solves the problem of the plague that killing many people as much as one third of people. His prayer to god and the offering that is made a gift for gods makes the earth come back to peace, at least for a while.

D. Conclusion

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the archetype of plague is a common pattern that can be found in many other stories, and the stories are passed from one generation to other generations. The story of *Atra-Hasis and the Flood* is one of the old stories that can be the base for the next story. This article also sees that human beings try to answer the phenomena that they face and try to solve the problem, and in the story is seen from the point of view on how God punishes human beings for they make him feel angry.

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