



From mother-goddess to the pandora's box: Glass ceiling myth Aslı ERCAN*

PhD Candidate, Institute of Social Sciences, Ege University, İzmir, Turkey

Abstract

The article is correlated to elements of the mother-goddess figure having been changed by a patriarchal cultural system, which has suppressed the positive features of the mother goddess role by strengthening the Pandora's Box myth throughout the centuries, and to the more recent gender-based division of labour and elements of the glass ceiling. Primarily in the article, the features of mother-goddesses existing in Greek, Anatolian, and Turkish myths from ancient ages until today are explained by correlating them to role of women in social life. Later on the article, addresses the glass ceiling syndrome which applies to women within a gender-based division of labour under patriarchal (masculine) rule is discussed. In the conclusion, a criticism is made of gender based-division of labour, masculine rule, and the glass ceiling factor.

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Keywords: Mother goddess*, Glass ceiling, Division of Labour;

1. Introduction

Woman figures in Greek, Anatolian and Turkish myths show the concepts of the mother goddess and goddesses. After the polytheistic period and the matriarchal structure of primeval ages, we see that the role of women has changed and been re-classified with the passing to monotheistic ages. Mother goddesses in countries or regions where myths evolved in polytheistic ages are representative figures which are pictured in the context of natural events which people experienced in their everyday life. These figures have become the subjects of legends and sagas. In different areas, mother goddess figures have similarities and they also have differences. Within a country or region different roles may be ascribed to the same goddess. This article is concerned primarily, with the most distinct goddesses. After mentioning features of goddesses and mother goddesses in society, we can examine the status of women in ancient Greek and Turkish society, and find that they are correlated to the Pandora myth.

Pandora's Box myth in Greek mythology is a version of punishment of males or people by Leader God Zeus in polytheistic age, made via woman figure. Via this myth, woman is reflected as a disease spreading, scaring figure which must be controlled by masculine rule by destroying the role of woman related to goddess' fertility. And also in today's working life, women in patriarchal rule or masculine cultures is seen as a figure that must be prisoned under glass ceiling discourse and should be controlled, as in Pandora. The Pandora myth which still exists today has become the new rule myth "glass ceiling" in the business world. Hence, this article reflects a critical point of view.

* E-mail address: ercan.ercanasli@gmail.com

* Although the mother goddess figure has different names according to different cultures and societies, the common features of all mother goddesses mentioned in the article are productivity, protection and fertility.

2. Mother Goddesses and Role of Woman in Ancient Age Society

Mythology is a world view which is societies' interpretation system of the world. It is composed of thoughts about myth, natural events, gods, heroes and other creatures (Bayat, 2010: 12, 30). Primitive societies produced divine creatures, gods and goddesses, formalized the information about life and social life and reflect them with mythological elements in order to understand world, nature and creation. Woman which has the feature of nature's fertility is correlated to earth and the mother goddess figure is created and so, basis of matriarchal structure was founded in ancient ages. Some of societies' being masculine and some being matriarchal is formed by their believing in creatures which have masculine or female features and also according to agricultural or warrior characters of societies.

The Mother goddess figure in Greek and Turkish mythology are tried to be explained especially in this part of the article. Myths, legends and epics in Turkish mythology formed a kind of history of Turkish societies before Islam because, these myths have been continuing with effecting social life beginning from epics of creation and process of founding Turkish states. The most distinct goddesses belonging to different Turkish tribes (Gokturk, Altai, Yakut etc.) are detected as Umay, Ayzit, Day-Mother, Sun-Mother, and Earth-Mother in sources. "Ayzit (Ayısı)" the creature is which protects, beauty, richness, women and children with being the mother goddess in Yakutian Turkish tribes. "Sun-Mother" is "sun goddess" and gives life to all nature (Uraz, 1994: 75, 77). Among Turks, "Earth-Mother" is the goddess which protects all Turkish tribes, and Fire-Mother is the goddess protecting family life. "White-Mother" which is sea goddess, in the epic of creation of Altai Turks, is the goddess which inspires God Ülgen to create the world (Ögel, 2004, 1.vol: 570). Mother goddess Umay, first mentioned at Orkhon Inscriptions is seen as female creature protecting mother and child, basically. At the same time, the mother goddess is the protector of Turkish tribes, making them strong, and providing fertility in their lands. Also the "goddess protecting" Turkish states (Otukan-earth mother cult) and with sun's being vitalises (Sun cult) Turks call Umay also as "blonde girl". And in some Turkish societies it is seen that she is also related to death (Çoruhlu, 2012: 42, 43). In epics and legends in Turkish mythology, it is seen that goddesses have common philanthropic, mercifulness and helpfulness features. Turkish tribes, even they were member of tengrism, women, took all responsibility of family institution with their husbands by taking features of mother goddesses, except Ülgen, as a pattern. Thus woman is respected in social and family life and is correlated to family and home.

Societies and cultures are affected by each other in ancient age Anatolia. We see these effects extending from Greece, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia to Egypt. Based on this, goddesses of Hittite, Sumerian, Greek societies and common goddess Cybele are mentioned within Anatolian and Greek goddesses. Among Hittites, health goddess "Kamruşşaba" is curative, while "Lama" is "protector" goddess of capital Hattusas. Among Sumerians, "Bo" is health goddess while "Kadi" is goddess of law and protection. (Uraz, 1994: 76, 77, 79). Greek marriage goddess Hera's nannies' being seasons, made her, mother of plants. Homer, introduced Hera as symbol of "a stubborn, jealous, catamaran goddess, and selfish bourgeois type of woman" (Erhat, 1993: 135). And Demeter is nourishing grain goddess of ancient agriculture societies. Also, she is the goddess who provides agricultural products to be planted and grow, and protects the products. According to legend, while Demeter is travelling the world in order to find her daughter Persephone, bringing fertility with herself to everywhere she goes, after learning her daughters having been kidnapped to underground, she goes asides and a worldwide famine arises. Her daughter gets out of earth and meets her mother with help of God Zeus in specific times of the year. "Birth, life, death and rebirth" is explained in this cycle (Mascetti, 2000: 125, 162, 164). As it is seen, Greek mother goddesses, unlike other goddesses, are classified with their negative feature beside their positive features by the masculine structure of that time. This classification onwards, guided patriarchal structures to detect status of women in society, and this led to women to accept these judgements.

The Mother goddess, taking place from Anatolia, Mesopotamia to Egypt in ancient age, and forming the basis of matriarchal structure, is "Cybele". Her being called in a different way in different times and societies has giving her an international feature. Finding sculptures of mother goddesses in Çatalhöyük and Hacilar regions in Anatolia between the years 6500-700 BC, has proved that there are real and local mother goddesses of Anatolia. And their names are, "Cybele" in Phrygia, "Marienna" in Sumerian, "Arinna" in Hittite, "İsis" in Egypt, "Artemis" in

Ephesus, “Magna Mater” in Rome, “Kubaba” in Kültepe tablets, “Ma” which is an ancient Anatolian name, in Kayseri and Yozgat regions. Specialty of Mother Goddess is symbolization of “nature with its all liveliness and fertility”. Apart from being the source of fertility, universalizing motherhood is important. Even if Mother Goddess figure has similar inseparable features in different civilizations, it has changed upon the cultures of societies. For example, people in Ephesus, although they had tried carrying on mother goddess religion for a long time, couldn’t object to the new religion (Christianity) and they loaded the phenomenon of mother goddess to Mother Mary and believed and respected her as in the way they did to mother goddess (Erhat, 1993: 61, 184). Therefore, the mother goddess figure especially in polytheistic age in Anatolia has matched with Mother Mary figure in monotheistic age. This cultural feature of Anatolia does not exist in other Greek and Turkish pantheons. And the creator figure in Anatolian culture is “mother goddess” and it forms matriarchal social structure.

After mentioning mother goddesses in different cultures above, now, status of woman in Greek and Turkish societies which are patriarchal in polytheistic age, will be compared. In pre-Islam Turkish society, when we look at the features of mother goddesses, it is seen that respect to goddesses does not remain only in religious frame, but also it is reflected to woman in daily life. Although Turkish society had a patriarchal system because of nomadic life and warrior characteristics, deserved value was given to women, and even responsibilities were given to them. In sources explaining Turkish epics, it is stated that women had an important place in state government and even they had the title of governing, an authority at that time (Gültepe, 2013: 49). Woman in Turkish societies, has an important place in the concept of family, and is defined as source of continuity of genes, founder of family, and sometimes taking the responsibility as breadwinner (Yardımcı, 2009: 3). It is stated in different sources that women had fun with man at bairam times within customs and traditions, took part in sports belonging to that culture—playing soccer, wrestle, hunting, riding horse and shooting arrows (Onay, 2012: 351). In this context, the existence of many goddesses in Turkish mythology and the existence of strong female features in ancient Turkish society which had a patriarchal social structure, is the proof of the value given to women.

When ancient Greek and Turkish societies are compared, significant differences are found. According to men, status of women in ancient Greek society is found as a second class citizen are deprived of civil rights and have no political rights and authority almost at the same level with slaves. Such that, man and woman’s relations in family which was paralleled with “slave-owner” relationship. Woman was seen as a possession owned by man with having no civil rights supported by law. Legitimacy of polygamy, led to a classification of woman in the society as a slave, odalisque, wife. And the task of woman in family is carved as “to give birth to healthy children” and to obey her husband in every respect (Çimen, 2008: 52). This situation of woman in ancient Greek society bring this question to our mind; why did a society which has many goddesses in their mythology, degraded woman to the level of slavery, exposed to classification, and legitimated this with law. Answer of this question may be hiding in Pandora’s Box myth.

Pandora’s Box Myth can be summarized as the command of leader God Zeus to gods and goddesses of Olympus to create “the first woman” Pandora for teaching a lesson to Prometheus, who stole fire for humans, and to punish humanity, by sending Pandora as a gift to Prometheus’ brother Epimetheus as a bride and because of her “wondering nature” and opening the gift box which is sent by Zeus, caused the spread of all evil to the world only when closing the box “hope is about to exit” (Erhat, 1993: 103, 237). This myth has metaphors in itself in ancient age and today. These metaphors are the first woman’s being a symbol sent for punishment for humanity, pictured as source of evil, creation of woman by masculine structure and adding features, and the emphasis of female features as “so-called weakness”. With the myths like this, for centuries the idea that women should be ruled by men has been supported by the various kinds of myths in different cultures. Pandora namely woman, is marked as a dangerous element that is in the hands of masculine namely god, and should be controlled. Within the scope of article, today’s Pandora is being controlled by masculine dominance ideology and glass ceiling in her daily life, division of labour based on social gender, will be discussed based on mythological figures and myths in the next chapter.

3. Division of Labour Based on Social Gender and Glass Ceiling Criticism

“While gender concept is defined on the basis of sexual identity and biologic differences, social gender concept expresses that gender is founded in social relations network” (Türk, 2007: 2). Social gender unlike biologic gender

distinction is gender roles attributed to woman and man by the society they belong to, in every aspect of society. There is some specific stereotype which has been formed since ancient period, within these roles. “A social role is body of rules and behaviours connected to a specific status. And attributed roles are the roles which you do not have any control on like gender, age, the city or country you were born” (Tutar, 2012: 128). Roles attributed according to gender are forming stereotypes. Stereotype, according to dictionary of psychology; “is a constant generalized prejudiced judgment addresses to all members of a group” (<http://www.termbank.net/psychology/6590.html>). And social gender stereotypes are placed in individuals and societies’ minds by dividing roles of man and woman. Female roles of woman and masculine roles of man are fixed in the frame of these mental diagrams and behaving according to these stereotypes in society is taught to individuals. Sankır (2010: 14) while defining woman as “belonging to a specific area, near to the nature, observed, passive, consumer, dependent”, defines man as “belonging to a common area, near to culture and technology, observer, active, producer, independent”. This scope, according to Selçuk and Tuzlukaya (2013: 6) quoting from Özen, within the frame of roles attributed to individual by society “while women are expected to be sensitive to social relations, emotional, caring, helpful, dependent; men are expected to be competitive, directed to individual success, independent, rationalist, pragmatist and dominant”. According to the researches about gender roles, the masculine role, is dominant and explosive but female role is nourishing, and also capable of having close relationships with others. Therefore, it is understood that both genders have different behavioural types.

Social gender roles can be defined as roles which are defined by societies and expect individuals to behave appropriately to them. Formation of social gender role, starts to be shaped from infancy, and it is stiffened with school-working life and social rules; thus, these learned stereotypes change into constant judgments (Saraç, 2013: 27). For example, maternity, paternity concepts, out of biologic roles attributed to genders, are roles formed by individuals because of safety, protection basic needs, and supported by the society. A child who does not have parents physically sees the persons taking care of him as parents; this is the best example. Based on this evaluation, we can say that working life is also shaped by different biologic features of man and woman, and masculine and female culture level of the societies they belong to. In Hofstede’s culture dimensions study, masculinity and femininity concepts are explained as; while masculinity is defined as, situation of dominant values in the society being success, money and material, femininity, and femininity, situation of dominant values in the society being quality of life and caring about everyone (Hofstede and Bond, 1984: 420). Individuals in female culture society attach importance to persons and relations between persons, exhibit behaviours consisting features like “caring, merciful, polite, loyal, sensitive about others”. On the contrast, in masculine culture, individuals have features like “dominant and oppressive, competitive, more independent from others, entrepreneur, more individualist and more materialist” (Gümüştekin and Emet, 2007: 104).

Roles attributed to genders and gender based occupations are created because of reflection of social life to working life. And gender based division of labour, although it existed in working life before Capitalism there was not any special working relations “peculiar to men and women”. Thus mentioned, division of labour was done according to content of the job. Gender based division of labour at present day means that there are “different types of man and woman in qualification of paid labour”. In other words, division of labour market according to biologic structure in working relations, making discrepancy in employment contracts and payments (Thomsen, 2008: 188). Thus, it is natural for man and woman to choose gender based occupations according to these imposed and formed working conditions in labour market. But, when human capital approach is considered, they claim that different job choices of men and women is caused by their gender roles, man-single or married- take much part in working life but women take a break of working life because of the reasons such as child care and when they return they accept simple jobs which are low paid and have no promotion opportunity (Günlük et al., 2000: 9). There is an irony like

naturalization of this situation as own choices of women by the masculine system which makes women a secondary element in working life.

In analyses of feminist theory addressed to *“gender based occupational stratification, 13 characters attributed to woman are formed they are classified as five positive, five negative and others. These are the five positive female factors; skilfulness in housework, dexterity, honesty and attractive physical appearance. Occupation stereotypes as a result of these features are occupations such as nurse, doctor, cook, cashier, sales person, servant, and midwife. Afterwards, these are five negative female factors; openness to guidance, physical weakness, unwillingness to travel, exposure to danger, to be less talented at science, less willingness to use physical strength. These features prevent them from being accepted or promoted in jobs perceived as man jobs. And the man job occupation stereotypes resulted from these features can be counted generally as; manager, senior executive (in private or public institutions), prosecutor, judge, engineer, firefighter, policeman, shipmaster, pilot, guard officer. And the third group other features, which cannot be classified as appropriate or inappropriate for doing a job but have an effect on forming a job as a woman job, are, liability to take orders, accepting low salary, willingness to do house chores”* (Lordoğlu and Kaplan, 2003: 258, 259)... Result of these analyses shows the perception in which women are appropriate, and not for specific jobs.

In the light of statements above, social gender and gender based job stereotypes are explained. There are gender organizations based on masculine dominance, beside sexualisation of jobs. If essentials of existence and operation of an organization are determined according to masculine or female features, this structure forms a gender based organization. Gender based organizations (male dominant organization or female dominant organizations) represents the structure in which all working rules are “exposed to a systematic discrimination” according to gender. Temel et al. (2006: 31) quoting from Bendl, states that the distinctive character of these organizations is *“symbolization of power and status in the organization according to gender, formalization of functions in the organization based on gender, requesting to feel the value given to gender”*. “Organization of gendered” shows up with process of creation and derivation of substructure of an organization. These processes are not limited with the articles stated below. According to Ollilainen, quoting from Acker, classification based on gender is, modelling, pricing, hierarchical regulations of that job arranged by the situation of being power and secondary. Creation of confirmative symbols, images, and metaphors for gender discrimination of the organization; existence of alliance and exclusion created by men and women among themselves in interactions between men and women; individuals in the organization know that the job is structured based on gender and they are expected to behave according to this, and also opportunities of the job is determined according to gender (Ollilainen, 1999: 6, 7).

The element, apart from sexualisation of organizations, and biologic and other factors which gender job stereotypes are based on, is the universal ideology created by masculine dominance because, the employment-working problems of women in Turkey and in the world are the same today. After masculine dominance is explained, these problems are mentioned within glass ceiling concept.

Türk, quoting from Bourdie, states that masculine dominance in the widest sense, *“is a concept that claims inequality in relationship between men and women is reproduced as a result of a series of complex effects”* and this concept is *“ a product of movements carried by interrelated institutions built by masculine dominance such as family, state and education system”*. *“Naturalization of discriminations”* by making societies accept as it has always existed, is aimed (Türk, 2007: 129). (Eichler,1980) Within gender role theory, there was a significant advancement in proliferation and spread of masculinity types in itself, in the late 1970s and early 80s. Different masculinity concepts are not investigated singularly, but in plural. These concepts are, *“hegemonic, crime, naturalism, resilience, marginality”*. Carrigan, Connell, and Hearn and Collinson quoting from Lee, defined

hegemonic masculinity as not only a “man role” but also as a diversity shown other people (the young homosexual men, women) (Hearn and Collinson, 2006: 301). In the light of this definition, hegemonic masculinity concept is way of application of gender based division of labour in masculine rule. This concept, not only in work relations sexist groups of men, but it also leads to development of behaviours with hegemonic male role by working woman employers or administrators. Patriarchal structure, social gender roles, created apart from biologic sexes formed via the ideology they developed, strengthened this structure. And masculine dominance wants application on the society and use of male role of masculine rule, which is attached to hierarchical order in working life, entirely on workers in the organization, and wants to oppress women which do not obey stereotype roles, by hegemonic masculinity.

The opinion that accepts superiority of man also reflects to working life in masculine cultures of patriarchal societies (Gül and Oktay, 2009: 426). In this context, gender discrimination addressed to woman is consolidated with glass ceiling concept. Glass Ceiling Concept is firstly used and remarked by Wall Street Journal in America, in 1986 (Lockwood, 2004: 2). Glass ceiling is defined as obstacles restricting especially woman and employees from ethnic minority (Renzetti and Curran, 2002: 224). It “*refers to generally organizational and perception obstacles, which are not explained by the employee’s success in the past*”, preventing promotion of a group and women in the organization in working life (Bozkurt, 2011: 290). This avoidance, which existed in the organisation, “*is related to the structural values of the organisation culture*” (Kesken and Ayyıldız, 2006: 351). In a masculine organisation culture, the jobs which women do and the highest level of promotion is fixed. The reasons why women employees are not included in the strategic decision process in an organisation are, “*social-culture mind in society, their dependence, not being ambitious and their emotional nature*” (Ada and Kelgökmen, 2006: 512).

Most commonly this situation is reflected in the organisation such as being less advantageous than men in working life because of sexist structure, giving less education opportunities of career advancement to women in the organization, giving less chance at promotions and assignments to woman employees and administrators, preference of male employees at management positions, existence of some stereotypes addressing to woman employees and administrators, treating women in a different way in the organization (Gül and Oktay, 2009: 429). According to survey results, addressing to attitudes of administrators of sme operating in İzmir province towards glass ceiling, carried by Mızrahlı and Aracı (2010: 153), attitudes towards woman employees changes according to gender of administrators (among 100 administrators). In further studies, it must be investigated that how family member women deal with invisible glass ceiling obstacle in the institution, how much they are included in company management process in small and medium sized enterprises and family companies.

According to results of research about the status and advancement of woman in working life carried at 625 companies which take service from management consultation company Hay Group, it is confirmed that %23 of mid-level managers are women, and the rate of women among senior managers is 11%, between 2007 and 2011. It is seen that most of woman administrators work in finance and technology sectors, and woman employees again in finance, medicine, retailing and technology sectors. Woman employees and administrators stated that there are obstacles related to glass ceiling, but these are tried to be overcome by women and women should work harder and make much effort in working life in order to overcome the obstacles (<http://www.haygroup.com/tr/press/details.aspx?id=35282>). Thus, participation of women in sectors generally producing “service” is fitting to structured female jobs stereotypes. We can correlate women’s proving themselves in technology sector, and increase of the woman administrators day by day, to coming into prominence of creativity in woman’s nature. In further studies, what kind of an advantage does the creativity underlying technology sector provide for women, and how technology companies increased their productivity by using masculine or female management culture can be subject to another research.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The article, aimed to obtain a new point of view by correlating The Pandora’s box myth and glass ceiling addressed to women in working life. How social gender roles are structured and reflected to working life by the existing system is handle via myths with a great amount of metaphoric elements and symbols. The common feature of Pandora’s Box myth and the glass ceiling is “women”. While perception of distrust as woman’s being a punishment tool is emphasized in one, and the other is forming obstacle structures with perception of distrust again. If the Pandora’s Box is a beginning, glass ceiling is the result of all these stereotype judgments about women. These problems, apart from glass ceiling, which women encounter in working life, are generally composed of impositions of masculine system. These are integrated problems causing discrimination like glass ceiling at work. We see that the number of woman senior managers increase slowly but surely with change of perceptions about woman in working life-women’s proving themselves- at present day. In further studies, masculine and female management styles should be examined, and problems women encounter in working life such as glass ceiling, and their solutions should be studied within the scope of productivity.

In business management, the promotion of women is avoided by male executives with no reason and because of this the emphasis on the fact that women are unable to break the glass ceiling concept is very common in journals and researches. Discourse concerning the existence of gender discrimination is kept always at the forefront and with this concept, the organisational culture being formed. Furthermore, organisational culture is reflected to management of organisational behaviour. Depending on the organizational culture management style, directly or indirectly the positions of women employees are determined in the organization. In the articles observed in the management literature, the majority of working relationship with the glass ceiling which perceptions of employees and managers are studies that prove the quantity-based. In previous researches, glass ceiling syndrome perception is proved, moreover in future studies of quantitative and qualitative research methods (survey, interview, focus group such that), the causes of the glass ceiling syndrome and the male employees’ patterns of behaviour can be investigated and this pattern should be used for the development of a model for changing the male employees’ fixed behaviours.

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