



حوليات آداب عين شمس المجلد ٤٨ (عدد أكتوبر – ديسمبر ٢٠٢٠)

<http://www.aafu.journals.ekb.eg>

(دورية علمية محكمة)



جامعة عين شمس

Allusions To Mesopotamian and Greek Mythologies in Modern Sports

Ansam Yaroub*
Mayada Zuhair**

College of physical education and sport sciences/ University of Baghdad

Abstract:

The famous ancient Olympic Games were founded to honor the Greek god Zeus. Therefore they were banned for their pagan rituals after the rise of Christianity. In Mesopotamia, however, similar games were founded even before the Olympic Games for the same reason, honoring the Mesopotamian deities. With the rise of Judaism, Christianity and Islam those deities were renounced as being pagan. Ironically, since the revival of the Olympic Games, all rituals and pagan gods were revived with them and on a global scale, one can see an encyclopedia of Mesopotamian and Greek deities in team logos, team names, sport companies, Olympic medals, coins and stamps for they all carry their pictures in glorious representations. The aim of this research is to identify the allusion to ancient mythologies in modern sports including Mesopotamian mythology and Greek mythology. In addition, the researchers aimed to identify the reasons for these extensive allusions to ancient gods considered by many religions as pagan. A survey of the most famous sport medals, coins and teams' logos, sport companies and team names with allusions to these ancient mythologies was conducted. A detailed account of the most famous deities in the modern world of sports was given. The researchers concluded that the world of sport is a global encyclopedia of ancient pagan mythologies.

Keywords : Mesopotamia, myth, pagan rituals, and sports.

Introduction :

According to the history of Sports, all ancient sports were either created for survival or for religious purposes.¹ Sports like running, boxing and archery were created by Man to survive against nature and wars. These same sports developed into war sports used to defend one's country against its enemies. Since protecting one's country is a sacred mission, training and practicing for war became religious rituals in ancient religions. Ancient religions came to be called myths because they involve many deities having supernatural qualities. The deities, however, greatly resemble the culture that worships them.²

Both Mesopotamian and Greek civilizations honored athletes and in some cases, the gods themselves are portrayed as being athletic. In this research, major gods and goddesses of both mythologies are scanned to prove their close link to today's world of sport.

Mesopotamian Mythology

Iraq was anciently called Mesopotamia, the country of two rivers; it was the cradle of one of the first civilizations in the world, Babylonian, Sumerian, Assyrian and Akkadian empires.³ These empires had strong religious beliefs that are deemed pagan by our religions; Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Although deemed pagan, the prominent gods and goddesses of these religious beliefs are still honored and highly appreciated to this day. In Iraqi sports, one can clearly see Christian sport team names like Gilgamesh and Ashur, championship names like Ishtar championship, Tummuz championship. On the international scale, those gods and goddesses are also heavily referenced; London Olympics 2012 carried many allusions to Babylon like the tower of Babel and Nimrod. Many clubs, team names, and logos carry those same gods even the ones deemed evil in all religions like Nimrod.

Ancient Mesopotamian gods were famous for their athletic abilities. Ashur was an archer, Nimrod was a mighty hunter, Gilgamesh was a wrestler. Although there are many goddesses in Mesopotamian mythology, Ishtar stands as the most prominent figure compared to the rest.

Ashur⁴:

Ashur is the chief deity in the Assyrian pantheon. He is portrayed as the god of war, a bearded winged man in armor carrying his drawn bow ready to release inside a solar disc. Unlike any other god in the Mesopotamian religions, Ashur has no parents, no children, and no female rival.⁵ He is depicted as the ultimate and sole ruler of the city of Ashur. His religion is called Ashurism and his followers are called Ashurite.⁶ After the rise of Christianity, this pre-Christian god was renounced as pagan although Assyrians consider him the essence of their identity. One can easily see the everlasting influence of this pagan god as "Nestorian Christians who live in

northern Syria and northern Iraq call themselves 'Assyrians' and their official symbol is the god within the sun disc whom they believe to be Ashur, not only god, but also a guardian of their identity"^v

Since Ashur is taken as their official symbol and is placed on their official flag, Assyrian athletes all over the world carry his symbol and many of them are named after him. There is a long list of sports clubs that carry the symbol of Ashur and they are all Christians and Assyrians like the **Assyrian Athletic Club**, which is the first official Assyrian athletic club, established in Kirkuk in ١٩٦٤. The club includes many sports like basketball, volleyball, tennis, hockey, football and many more. Although the name was changed to Al-Ta'amim club, its emblem still carries the ancient god Ashur. **Assyriska BK** is another example of a football club based in Sweden founded in ١٩٨٥ by Assyrian immigrants.[^] There are more than ten Assyrian football teams in Sweden alone and, of course, these teams carry either Ashur or Ishtar in their iconography.[^]

In addition, one cannot forget the late **Ammo Baba (Emmanuel Baba Dawud, ١٩٣٤ - ٢٠٠٩)** that is one of the most famous football figures in the history of Iraq. He was a former player and coach and an Assyrian Christian.[^] In fact, there are many famous Assyrian athletes all over the world, name like Andre Agassi a former American tennis player, Mikhail Sado a Russian champion in wrestling, and Sammy Merza is one of many champion boxers in The United States of America. For more information, there is a long list of famous sports figures on Wikipedia, listed under 'notable ethnic Assyrian/Chaldeans/Syriac individuals'[^]

Ishtar :

Ishtar is the most famous goddess in the history of Mesopotamia. She was the Assyrian and Babylonian goddess of love, sex, fertility, and war. She was called many names including Inanna.[^] She was worshiped mainly in Iraq, yet to this day there is a belief system called "Ishtarism" that reached the United States of America.[^] Ishtar is usually depicted naked with her lions wearing her distinctive crown.[^] She gained her fame because of three characteristics in her personality; being the god of love and free sexuality, goddess of war thus obsessed with battle and death, and finally, she is always associated with the planet Venus and nicknamed the morning and evening star.[^] The eight-pointed star of Ishtar, with or without rays, has been depicted by many to represent protection during the time of war. Thus, one can see her star on law enforcement badges in the western world. Her star with rays was the official flag of Iraq till it was changed. Yet the modern official flags of Assyrians and Chaldeans carry her star. The name Ishtar is very popular in Iraq for females as well as products and media; Ishtar Broadcasting Cooperation.

Many female athletes are named Ishtar after the goddess Ishtar, like Ishtar Azzawi. Ishtar is a professional jiu-jitsu fighter.[^] Many sports championships are called Ishtar like Ishtar championship for women's

volleyball, Ishtar International championship for cheerleading and there is Ishtar United FC.¹⁵

Ishtar was the goddess who created the concept of sacred prostitution. Thus, in the Bible she is called the mother of The Harlots and sometimes the whore of Babylon.¹⁶ In both Judaism and Christianity Ishtar plays an integral role in the apocalypse as prophecies have it. According to The conspiracy theorists, Freemasons who built America worship the goddess of sexual liberty, Ishtar can be found along with her many symbols in their architecture.¹⁷ One of the most disputed symbols of Ishtar is the Liberty Statue which was designed by a Freemason in the shape of the goddess Ishtar and is depicted wearing her crown.¹⁸ If this theory is true, then many American sports clubs carrying the symbol of liberty in fact carrying the symbol of Ishtar.

Nimrod:

Nimrod was not a god like Ashur or Ishtar. He was a king a descendant of Noah and described as the mighty hunter in the Bible.¹⁹ He is famous for his tower of defiance; the Tower of Babel. He is condemned in Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Yet one can clearly see the name of this Antichrist almost everywhere in sports. There is a Nimrod City in Israel²⁰ as well as a town named Nimrod in the United States.²¹ Many famous professional athletes are named Nimrod like Nimrod Tishman²² and Nimrod Mashiah;²³ both Israeli professional athletes: Tishman being a basketball player and Mashiah a windsurfer. As a mascot, Nimrod was used as an award given to a basketball team as a symbol of the mighty hunter and a worrier mentioned in the Bible.

Mesopotamian gods are not the only ones who were famous in the world of sports, Ancient cities like Babylon, took their fair share of fame too. Babylon is also heavily referenced in sports as a symbol of defiance, corruption, and evil. One can find series of publications and TV channels dedicated for documenting the corruption in the world of sports like *Wrestling Babylon* which is a part of the Babylon series that documents "Drugs, sex, death, and scandal"²⁴ in wrestling. *Boxing Babylon* (1990), *Courts of Babylon* (1990), *Football Babylon* (1996), etc. In New York, and other parts of America there is an entire town named Babylon after the ancient city of Babylon and they have their own sports club and sports products; Babylon club. At the first glance, it might seem amazing how our history is known to the western world. However if one searches deeper one can easily find that this history is theirs more than ours. In both Judaism and Christianity these cities and ancient deities played a great role and are mentioned in the holy books. According to the Bible, Babylon was founded by one of the descents of Prophet Noah; Nimrod, who built the city of Shinar and erected a Tower to reach God.²⁵ Thus it's the birthplace of the

Antichrist and prophecies have it that doomsday will start in Babylon too so it became a symbol of everlasting "evil and defiance."^{٢٨} In Talmud, "Babylon is the center of the Jews' Diaspora from their holy Land Judah." Nebuchadnezzar, one of the great Kings of Babylon captured the city of Jerusalem, and destroyed it by burning it along with all its temples. Thus in Judaism Babylon is also a symbol of evil and injustice.^{٢٩}

Greek Mythology

It is a well-known fact that the ancient Olympic Games were held to honor the god Zeus, but who is Zeus? The Greeks used to believe that the sky is filled with gods and goddesses and each god and goddess is specialized in one aspect or more of their life. These gods fight each other and the stronger rules the world. The first gods who ruled were called the primordial deities, followed by the Titans, who were twelve powerful gods usually depicted as giants with incredible strength.^{٣٠} After ten years of war with the Olympian gods, the Titans were defeated and the Olympian gods ruled. The Olympian gods won the war,^{٣١} so their followers organized the Olympic Games to celebrate this victory.

The Olympian gods are said to live on Mount Olympus. The god of gods is Zeus and his wife is Hera. Their temples can still be seen on Mount Olympus. The first games started with offerings of sacrifices to the altars of gods, and fire is lit in Hera's temple. Female priestesses in white dresses lit the fire with the sun rays reflected from a parabolic mirror.^{٣٢} After the fire was lit the games began. Not everyone was allowed to participate in the games as there were strict rules. The athlete had to be free born, male, unmarried Greek. The moment the athlete enters the stadium, he should strip naked, clean wash himself thoroughly, rub olive oil and sand on his body for protection then start the competitions. The winner was given a kotinos, olive wreath and fame by the god of victory, Nike.^{٣٣}

The Olympic games were not the only games held to honor these gods. In fact, the Pan-Hellenic Games are a collection of games each held to honor a specific god in a specific place; The Olympic games, held in Olympia and Nemea to honor Zeus, Delphi are held to honor Apollo the god of light and reason, and Isthmus of Corinth to honor Poseidon, the god of the sea and horses.^{٣٤}

When Christianity reached Greece through the Roman conquest, these mythical gods were renounced and Olympic Games were considered pagan rituals. The Emperor Theodosius who was a Christian "abolished all pagan cults and centers"^{٣٥} the place was vandalized and eventually destroyed by earthquakes and floods. With the rise of Christianity, all pagan gods and goddesses became pure legends and myths in literature and arts.

In ١٨٩٤ a French Baron, Pierre de Coubertin, recreated the Olympic Games and established a governing body for it; the International Olympic Committee and wrote the Olympic Charter. He gave this supreme governing body its own flag, motto, logo and national anthem. Yet, what is

questionable is the insistence on recreating the pagan gods from the very first Olympic Games until now.^{r1} All Olympic Games start with the lighting of the Olympic torch. This is performed a few months before the Olympics in the temple of Hera by girls dressed in white. The fire is still lit by the same parabolic mirror in pagan rituals to "invoke the god Apollo;" but why? Why reincarnate the pagan rituals? Why worship gods other than our own true god?

The torch itself is the most questionable aspect of the ritual. Myth has it that one of the Titan gods, Prometheus, managed to stay away from the ten years of war with Zeus. Therefore, he was not banished like the rest of the Titans.^{ry} He lived near humans and saw that in order for humans to survive and develop they needed fire so he stole the holy fire of Zeus and gave it to humans. Zeus was furious with Prometheus, he tied him to a rock and placed him on top of a high mountain. Every day Zeus sent his eagle to eat Prometheus heart out, but since Prometheus is immortal this punishment lasted for a long time until Hercules freed Prometheus. So the torch was lit to honor Zeus because this fire is a symbol of Zeus's "divine essence."^{rz} Baron De Coubertin explained the lighting of the torch in a very beautiful manner saying that the lighting of the torch marks the continuity from the past to the present to preserve tradition.^{r3}

During the ancient Olympics, the goddess of victory, Nike, gave the winner an olive wreath. In modern Olympics the winners are given medals designed by the host cities after the approval of the IOC. Many medals have been designed over the years and they carried many symbols, many of them carried Zeus, Hera, Nike, the temples, the stadium, while others had natural scenery or national symbols of the host country. The IOC issued a strict rule that the Olympic medals, especially the summer Olympic medals should "show a representation of Nike with the panathenic stadium in the background."^{r4}

In other words, during every Olympics, the sports world celebrated Zeus and Hera and their own temples, danced to invoke the god Apollo, lit the torch of Prometheus, the light bearer, and a torchbearer goes on a torch rally all around the world. The fire is taken into the city of sports where there is the IOC flag, and anthem. Coaches, players and officials taking turns to make the Olympic oath. The winner was blessed with a medal with the goddess Nike. There are too many pagan rituals and it seems as if the Olympic Games are preserving ancient religions rather than ancient traditions.

A very quick scan of all the gods mentioned above in the world of sports reveals too many associations starting from the very first gods; the Titans. The Olympian gods have their own share starting from Zeus with his symbol of the lightning bolt. Zeus can be found not only on Olympic medals

but almost everywhere there is a sports company named Zeus that has the logo of the bolt. Because there are many famous athletes nicknamed Zeus, including Orlando Claude Brown who was a professional American football player nicknamed Zeus. It is needless to say that Usian bolt is directly associated with Zeus's bolt. Nike, the goddess of victory, is depicted on every Olympic medal and there is a sports manufacturing company with her name, Nike.

Apollo

Apollo is known as a god of light, prophecy, inspiration, poetry, music, and healing. He is the son of Zeus and Leto and a twin brother of Artemis. Symbols including the sun, lyre, swan, eagle, and mouse have been associated with his name.

In addition to his role of the embodiment of light and reason, he embodies the dark world of the dead, who according to superstition, can return and visit guilty people bringing diseases and death. He becomes a god of divine distance and sends threats to make killers aware of their guilt, and purifies them of it religious law and constitution. However, his power as god of prophecy is revealed in communicating his knowledge of the future with humans through oracles or prophets in various regions of Greece; the most famous of which is the oracle of Delphi.^{٤١} Despite his reputation as a god of healing, his name is also associated with sudden death. In their war with the Trojans, he sends plague-tipped arrows against the Greek armies.^{٤٢} Hence, the bow and arrow are symbolically associated with Apollo, the god of hunting.

In sports, the name of Apollo has been honored and adopted by several sports clubs in Cyprus and Greece; as **Apollon Limassol**, a Cypriot sports club, based in Limassol; founded in ١٩٥٤. The team's emblem represents the Olympian god Apollo from the Greek mythology. The colours of the team are blue and white. They represent the colours of the Greek flag as the creation of the team was well connected with the struggles of Cypriot people for unification with Greece.^{٤٣} Two other Greek clubs are **Apollon Kalamarias FC** in Thessaloniki, Greece ١٩٢٦;^{٤٤} and the multi-sports club **A.S. Apollon Patras** in Patras, Greece.^{٤٥}

Many athletes' names associated with Apollo are renowned nowadays such as Apolo Anton Ohno (born May ٢٢, ١٩٨٢), a retired short track speed-skating competitor and an eight-time medalist in the ٢٠٠٢ Winter Olympics.^{٤٦} Apollo Perelini also known as 'Apollo ١١'/'Terminator' (born ١٦ July ١٩٦٩ in Auckland, New Zealand) is a former Samoa dual code rugby international player. He is named 'Apollo ١١' because he was born on the day that the Apollo space project was launched.^{٤٧} In the ١٩٧٦ Oscar-winning film Rocky, Apollo Creed, a well-known fictional character has appeared as undefeated World Heavyweight Boxing Champion and Rocky's opponent.^{٤٨} His name as well as his nickname "the Destroyer" in

the movie reflect the divine power of Apollo and implies a serious threat for his enemy based on the god's ability to cause sudden death and diseases.⁴⁹

Ajax or Aias

He is one of the mythological Greek heroes, the son of King Telamon of Salamis; always portrayed with his great shield and spear. He was the grandson of Zeus, and his first wife Periboea, was the cousin of Achilles and is the elder half-brother of Teucer. He is a prominent figure and a warrior of great courage who played an important role in Homer's *Iliad* and in the epic poems about the Trojan War. He is also referred to as "**Telamonian Ajax**," or "**Ajax the Great**" which distinguishes him from (**Ajax the lesser**); son of Oileus. In Etruscan mythology, he is known as **Aivas Tlamunus**. When Achilles dies, killed by Paris (with the help of Apollo), Ajax and Odysseus fight against the Trojans to get the body and bury it with his companion, Patroclus. Ajax recovers the body and carries it to the ships, while Odysseus fights off the Trojans. After the burial, they fight over the ownership of the magical armor of Achilles as recognition for the heroic efforts each has done for the Greek. A competition then is held between Odysseus and Ajax to decide who deserve this divine armor, which had been forged on Mount Olympus by the smith-god Hephaestus. The argument proves Odysseus to be more eloquent and the council awards him the armor. Being disappointed, Ajax goes in rage and slaughters a flock of sheep shedding his anger on the Achaean leaders including Odysseus and Agamemnon. This bloody incident has distorted his honor, and decided to kill himself rather than live in shame. His suicide makes him a legendary hero,⁵⁰ worshipped at Athens and the tribe *Aiantis* named after him.

Having revived this legendary hero, his name has been adopted in the modern age by some sports clubs in the world with reference to his honorable deeds. **Aias Salaminas F.C.** is a Greek football club in Salamis Island. The association was founded in 1931 deriving its name from the Salaminian king Ajax the Great.⁵¹

In the Netherlands, **there is Amsterdamsche Football Club Ajax**. It is a Dutch professional football club based in Amsterdam for *Jewish Australian*. It is the seventh most successful European club of the 20th century with 33 Dutch football Championship titles and 11 cups; founded in 1900. The new club logo introduces the head of the Greek hero Ajax drawn with just 11 lines, symbolizing the 11 players of a football team.⁵² Historically, Ajax club is named after the legendary hero Ajax the son of the god; the Jews call him The Lancer or Lucky Ajax. Having a Jewish root, Ajax became a symbol of unrest in modern Dutch society. It got a Jewish image since the 1930s when the home stadium was located next to a Jewish neighborhood of Amsterdam –Oost. The fans of Ajax whether Jewish or not embraced Ajax's Jewish identity: calling themselves

"super Jews", and adopting Jewish symbols such as the Star of David and the Israeli flag.^{٥٤}

Hermes

Hermes also called Mercury (Roman), is one of the Twelve Olympian gods; son of Zeus and nymph Maia. He is the god of shepherds, travel, trade, weights and measures, oratory, literature, athletics and thieves, and known for his trickery and intellect. He was worshiped throughout Greece; especially in Arcadia and festivals in his honor were called Hermoea.^{٥٥} Most important, he is the messenger of the gods delivering Zeus will to mankind. He is also described as the god of boundaries and transition; quick and full of cunning. He can move freely between the worlds of the living and the underworld.^{٥٦} His main symbol is the Greek kerykeion or Latin caduceus, which appears in a form of two snakes wrapped around a winged staff with carvings of the other gods. Hence he is depicted in classical arts holding the heralds' staff with the intertwined serpents and wearing his winged golden sandals.^{٥٧} His symbols also include the herma, the rooster, the tortoise, satchel or pouch, winged sandals, and a winged cap.^{٥٨} In the *Ways of the Worlds*, Lay (١٩٩٣) refers to Hermes as a patron of the roads and protector of travelers who used to put stones on the wayside as a mark for passing through the crossroads. These heaps of stones or "herma"^{٥٩} became shrines for Hermes all around Arcadia.^{٦٠}

However, the most important thing about Hermes is being the god of athletics. He is known for his speed and interest in sports, and has credit for inventing foot-racing and boxing. He has a statue at the entrance of the Olympia stadium, and many more in every gymnasium throughout Greece.^{٦١} Today his name associated with many sports clubs and teams such as: Hermes Club (the late ١٩th-century cyclist club of Chicago depicted Hermes on a gold disc the size of a quarter,) Hermes F.C. (Scottish soccer team,) founded in ١٩٦٨,^{٦٢} and Hermes Volley Oostende (Belgian volleyball team).^{٦٣}

Ares

He is one of the Twelve Olympians and the Greek god of war; son of Zeus and Hera. His name means the destroyer or the avenger usually recognized by his war chariot pulled by his sons. In Greek mythology, he is depicted as physically gigantic with a loud voice, violent, schemer, cruel, bloody, full of rage and courage necessary to beat his enemies in war and battles.^{٦٤} This brutal and war-like nature makes him despised by other gods even his father Zeus described him as "the most hateful of gods."^{٦٥} His sons Phobos (Fear), Deimos (Terror) and his sister Eris (strife) are described as death demons as well as war demons. They ally with him on the battlefields side by side with the other war demons such as the Keres (the soul-eating underworld spirits.) Hence the suggestion he was the god of death and underworld before he became the god of war.^{٦٦} Unlike Athena, he has sympathized with the losing side during the Trojan War and lost his

value. Among the Roman gods, Mars is the counterpart of Ares. Symbols include chariot, spear, helmet, boar (Greek), wolf (Roman), others are a serpent, dog, vulture, and shield.^{tv}

Regarding his “physical valor,”^{ta} courage and speed as one of the Olympian gods, he has also influenced the world of sports today. Many sports clubs have adopted his name and placed his picture as a logo to represent their power and cast fear and terror in their opponents’ hearts, such as Aris F.C., or Aris Thessaloniki FC (in European competitions), a Greek football club based in the city of Thessaloniki, Macedonia, Greece. It is part of the major Greek multi-sports club A.C. Aris Thessaloniki; first created in ١٩١٤ as Aris Thessaloniki Football Club. It is named after Ares, the ancient Olympian "god of War", associated also with his courage and masculinity, whose image is portrayed on the club's logo as depicted in the Ludovisi Ares sculpture.^{ta} Others like Aris Limassol , a Greek Cypriot football club based in Limassol. It is one of the most historic football clubs in Cyprus dated to ١٩٣٠.^v And FC Aris Bonnevoie ١٩٢٢ which was a football club, based in Luxembourg City. It is now a part of Racing FC Union Luxembourg.^{v1}

Titans

The Titans are a race of gods in Greek mythology descending from the primordial deities and immediately preceding the Olympian gods. Most significantly, the Titans include the first twelve children of Gaia (Mother Earth) and Uranus (Father Sky).^v Among the first twelve Titans, the females are Mnemosyne, Tethys, Theia, Phoebe, Rhea, and Themis and the males are Oceanus, Hyperion, Coeus, Cronus, Crius, and Iapetus. They are humanlike giants with extraordinary strength who ruled the universe during the legendary Golden Age and included the first pantheon of Greek deities.^{vt} They also include the Cyclopes, giant creatures with one eye in the middle of their forehead and other monsters. The myth says that Uranus is overthrown by his son Cronus who swallows his first five children- except the sixth one Zeus survived -in order to avoid the same fate. Ironically, the Titans are overthrown by Cronus ‘children headed by Zeus and his other swallowed five brothers and sisters (the Olympian deities) Hades, Poseidon, Hestia, Hera and Demeter in a ten-year war. ^{vz} The War of the Titans or *Titanomachy* ends by sending the Titans into the abyss of Tartarus (dark place underworld) to start a new age of the Olympians ruled by Zeus.^{vo}

It is not surprising to find a long list of sports clubs named after the Titans such as the Gold Coast Titans, Australian rugby league team; Newport Titans, a rugby league side who play out of Newport, South Wales; the Titans cricket team, the Nashua Titans, a South African cricket team based in Centurion and Benoni; Tennessee Titans, American football team in the National Football League; New York Titans, former name of the New

York Jets , an American football team; New York Titans (lacrosse) , a team in the National Lacrosse League; Ulster Titans, Rugby Union team based in Belfast, Northern Ireland; and Victorian Titans, former professional basketball team from Melbourne in the NBL.^{٧٦} The logos of these sports teams hold the emblems of the Titans, their war shields, spears, swords, and fire evoking by that the Titans' mythology, as "magical giants"^{٧٧} and avengers with fighting spirits, heavenly powers and ready to overthrow their enemies. The belief in the magical power of the Titans has been translated in the sport movie *Remember the Titans* (٢٠٠٠), a true story of a football coach who decided to use all his powers to overcome the hostility and racial discrimination of his colleagues and players alike in order to lead his black and white integrated team to glory.^{٧٨}

Conclusion:

After scanning the names and logos of sports teams, names of famous athletes, names of national and international championships and sports products, the researchers concluded that there are so many allusions to ancient gods and goddesses of all ancient religions as if they were still worshiped. Media and Social media play a great role in spreading these ancient religions and their symbols making people always interested in them, and in many cases fascinated by them.

Mesopotamian gods and goddesses are referred to very frequently in the world of sports specially Ishtar, while Christian teams use both Ashur and Ishtar very often although they are fully aware they are pagan gods renounced by Islam and Christianity. On the international level, Nimrod is frequently referred to by Israeli sports teams and individuals.

Greek gods are the most popular of all gods in the world of sports. Sports manufactures have their names and symbols, championships and trophies named after them, famous athletes are nicknamed after those gods. The Olympic Games themselves are still performed in a manner that honors each one of those gods.

East or West, people all around the world believe in the symbolic references of these mythical gods and goddess. Their superpowers, strange whims, avenging desire, and physical strength, as well as their mythical stories, have become a source of inspiration in many aspects of life, even sports.

الملخص:

اساطير بلاد ما بين النهرين والاعريق في الرياضة الحديثة انسام ياروب ميادة زهير

ان الألعاب الأولمبية القديمة وجدت كطقوس دينية تقام على شرف زيوس رب الأرباب في الأساطير الأغريقية وتم ايقافها لأنها طقوس وثنية بعد ظهور المسيحية. في بلاد ما بين النهرين لدينا ألعاب مشابهة كانت تقام لتكريم الآلهة القديمة. مع ظهور ديانة التوحيد اليهودية والمسيحية والاسلام تم تحريم هذه الطقوس باعتبارها وثنية. تكمن مشكلة البحث في محاولة ايجاد اسباب سيادة الالهة الوثنية القديمة في الرياضة الحديثة فتجد الكثير من أسماء الفرق و البطولات تحمل اسمائهم هناك بطولة جلجامش وتموز وعشتار وهناك فرق محلية ودولية اسمها اشور وعشتار وحتى نمرود. الألعاب الأولمبية تم احيائها من جديد كالعاب رياضية لكن المثير للدهشة ان الكثير من الطقوس الوثنية بقيت الى وقتنا الحاضر وأكثر من ذي قبل. الهدف من البحث التعرف على أشهر الالهة المتعلقة بأساطير بلاد النهرين والاعريق في عالم الرياضة الحديثة. فضلا عن ذلك يهدف البحث الى ايجاد اسباب هذه الاشارات المكثفة الى هذه الالهة التي تعد وثنية في الاديان السائدة. قامت الباحثتان بمسح عالم الرياضة الحديث من حيث الاعلام والمنتجات الرياضية وأسماء الفرق وأسماء البطولات وشعارات الفرق والشعارات على الملابس الرياضية والاكسسوارات والشوشوم وحتى المراكز الخاصة باللياقة والصحة والأندية الرياضية ليجاد اشارات الى هذه الأساطير والديانات الوثنية القديمة. أهم الاستنتاجات التي توصل اليها البحث هي أن عالم الرياضة يعد موسوعة عالمية تضم كل الأساطير الوثنية القديمة خاصة الاعريقية منها.

References

¹ John Nauright and Charles Parrish, *Sports Around the World : History, Culture, and Practice*, (Oxford: ABC – CLIO, ٢٠١٢), p.١.

^٢ Ibid, p.٢.

^٣ Ibid.

^٤ **Ashur** "is an East Semitic god, and the head of the Assyrian pantheon in Mesopotamian religion , worshipped mainly in the northern half of Mesopotamia, and parts of north-east Syria and south east Asia Minor which constituted old Assyria. He may have had a solar iconography."Wikipedia the free online encyclopedia, retrieved March ٦, ٢٠١٧.

^٥ James Hastings, *Dictionary Of The Bible*, Volume V, (Hawaii: University Press Of the Pacific, ٢٠٠٤), p. ٥٤٧.

^٦ Ibid

^٧ Geoff Hann, Karen Dabrowska, and Tina Townsend – Greaves, *Iraq: The Ancient Sites And Kurdistan*, ٢nd Ed, (UK: Bradt Travel Guide Ltd, ٢٠١٥), p. ٢٤٦.

^٨ For more sports clubs that carry the name and the symbol of the pre – Christian god Ashur check the following list: list of Assyrian – Syriac football teams in Sweden (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Assyrian-Syriac_football_teams_in_Sweden)

^٩ Check Appendix ()

^{١٠} "Emmanuel Baba Dawud" Wikipedia the free online encyclopedia. Retrieved at ٨/٣/٢٠١٧.

^{١١} (URL:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ethnic_Assyrians/Chaldeans/Syriacs) Wikipedia the free online encyclopedia. Retrieved March ٨, ٢٠١٧.

- ^{١٧} Tammi Schneider. *Introduction To Ancient Mesopotamia Religion*, (UK: Wm.B.Eerdmom's Publishers Co, ٢٠١١), p. ٧٦٠.
- ^{١٨} R.M. Coobes, *Ishtarism Coming Out of the closet In American Churches* (URL:http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/esp_ishtar.htm.) Retrieved March ١٠, ٢٠١٧.
- ^{١٩} "Ishtar" Wikipedia the free online encyclopedia. Retrieved March ١٠, ٢٠١٧.
- ^{٢٠} Littleton C. Scott, *Gods, Goddesses, And Mythology*, vol ٦ (New York: Marshall Cavendish, ٢٠٠٥), p. ٧٦٢.
- ^{٢١} "Ishtar Azzawi: Star supporting Arab Women that train Jiu - Jitsu" (URL:<http://www.bjjee.com/articles/ishtar-azzawi-start-supporting-arab-women-that-train-jiu-jitsu/>) Retrieved March ١٠, ٢٠١٧.
- ^{٢٢} "Ishtar United FC - عشتار نادي الرياضي في غرب استراليا" Facebook. Retrieved March ١٠, ٢٠١٧.
- ^{٢٣} "Ishtar", Wikipedia
- ^{٢٤} Chandruly Brown, *Prophetic Justice* (USA: Xlibris LLC, eBook, ٢٠١٣), p. ١١١.
- ^{٢٥} Ibid,
- ^{٢٦} "Nimrod," Wikipedia the free online encyclopedia. Retrieved March ١٠, ٢٠١٧.
- ^{٢٧} Nimrod is a small Israeli settlement, cooperative agricultural community, Wikipedia the free online encyclopedia. Retrieved March ١٠, ٢٠١٧.
- ^{٢٨} Nimrod is a city in Wadena County, Minnesota, United States.
- ^{٢٩} **Nimrod Tishman** (born May ١٢, ١٩٩١) is an Israeli professional basketball player who plays for the Israeli team Maccabi Kiryat Gat B.C. Wikipedia the free online encyclopedia. Retrieved at ١٠/٣/٢٠١٧
- ^{٣٠} Wikipedia the free online encyclopedia. Retrieved March ١٠, ٢٠١٧.
- ^{٣١} Ivrin Muchnick, *Wrestling Babylon : Pile deriving tales of drugs, sex, death and scandal*, (USA: ECW Press, ٢٠٠٧)
- ^{٣٢} Arye Forta, *Examining Religions : Judaism* (Oxford :Harcourt Education Limited, ١٩٩٥), P٨.
- ^{٣٣} Ibid
- ^{٣٤} Ibid, p٧
- ^{٣٥} Michel Ford, *Heroes, Gods and Monsters Of Ancient Greek Mythology*, (e – book : Salariya Book Company Ltd, ٢٠١٢).
- ^{٣٦} Ibid.
- ^{٣٧} "Factsheet: The Olympic Games Of Antiquity" "the Official site of the International Olympic Committee (<https://www.olympic.org/ancient-olympic-games>) retrieved at ١/٣/٢٠١٧.
- ^{٣٨} "Ancient Olympics" the Official site of the International Olympic Committee (<https://www.olympic.org/ancient-olympic-games>) retrieved at ١/٣/٢٠١٧.
- ^{٣٩} Ibid.
- ^{٤٠} Ibid
- ^{٤١} "Modern Olympics" Ibid.
- ^{٤٢} "Prometheus," Wikipedia the free online encyclopedia. Retrieved at ١/٣/٢٠١٧.
- ^{٤٣} Ibid.
- ^{٤٤} "modern Olympics," The Officail of the International Olympic Committee (<https://www.olympic.org/ancient-olympic-games>) retrieved at ١/٣/٢٠١٧
- ^{٤٥} Ibid.
- ^{٤٦} **Encyclopedia Britannica**, ٢٠١٧ ed., s.v. " Apollo,,GRECO-ROMAN MYTHOLOGY."(URL: <https://www.britannica.com/editor/The-Editors-of-Encyclopdia-Britannica/٤٤١٩>) Retrieved February ١٨, ٢٠١٧.
- ^{٤٧} Natalie Bulzynsky, Jonathan Shellnut, and Richard Marcus, *The Unofficial Heroes of Olympus Companion: Gods, Monsters, Myths, and What's in Store for Piper, Jason, and Leo*

(US: Ulysses press, 2011), Pp, 32-30.

¹⁷Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2017ed., s.v. Apollo. (URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollon_Limassol.) Retrieved February 22, 2017.

¹⁸Ibid.,

¹⁹Ibid.,

²⁰Ibid., s.v. "Apollo Ohno" (URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apolo_Ohno) Retrieved March 13, 2017.

²¹Ibid.,

²²Ibid.,

²³Natalie Bulzynsky, Jonathan Shellnut, and Richard Marcus, *The Unofficial Heroes of Olympus Companion: Gods, Monsters, Myths, and What's in Store for Piper, Jason, and Leo*, (US: Ulysses press, 2011), Pp, 32-30.

²⁴The legend says that from his blood a red flower sprang bearing on its leaves the initial letters of his name, AI. Ajax was the tutelary hero of the island of Salamis, where he had a temple and an image and where a festival called Aianteia was celebrated in his honour. See Encyclopedia Britanica, 2017 ed., s.v. "Ajax" (URL: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ajax-the-Greater>) Retrieved February 24, 2017.

²⁵Greek Mythology, 2017 ed., S.v. "Ajax" (URL: <http://www.greekmythology.com/Myths/Mortals/Ajax/ajax.html>.) Retrieved February 24, 2017.

²⁶Also in Encyclopedia of Myths and Legends of the World, 2017ed., s.v. "Ajax"

(URL: <http://www.mythencyclopedia.com/A-Am/Ajax.html>.) Retrieved February 24, 2017.

²⁷Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2017ed., s.v. "Aias Salamina FC," (URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aias_Salamina_F.C.) Retrieved 20 February 2017.

²⁸"Europe's Club of the Century". International Federation of Football History & Statistics. in Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2017ed., s.v. "Ajax" (URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AFC_Ajax.) Retrieved 20 February 2017.

²⁹See "Ajax and the Jewish Issue". ajax-usa.com., 2007. Retrieved 20 February 2017.

³⁰Ron Leadbetter, "Hermes," *Encyclopedia Mythica*, 2017 ed., (URL: <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/h/hermes.html>) Retrieved 19 March 2017.

³¹Jonan Gulizio, *Hermes and e-ma-a 𐎲: The Continuity of his Cult from the Bronze Age to the Historical Period* (Texas: University of Texas, 2000), P., 113-14.

³²Michael Jordan, *Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses*, 2nd ed. s.v. "Hermes," (US: Facts on File, Inc., 2004), P., 122-23.

³³Ron Leadbetter, "Hermes," *Encyclopedia Mythica*, 2017 ed. (URL: <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/h/hermes.html>) Retrieved 19 March 2017.

³⁴These heaps of stones or herma developed into phallic pillars look like funerary tombs therefore some Greeks deities considered Hermes as the guardian of graves. See Michael Jordan, *Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses*, 2nd ed. s.v. "Herma," US: Facts on File, Inc., 2004. P., 123.

³⁵M. G. Lay, James E. Vance, *Ways of the World: A History of the World's Roads and of the Vehicles That Used Them*, US: Rutgers University Press, 1992. P. 22.

³⁶Ron Leadbetter, "Hermes," *Encyclopedia Mythica*, 2017 ed., (URL: <http://www.pantheon.org/articles/h/hermes.html>) Retrieved 19 March 2017.

³⁷The club is named after an advert in a magazine for a *Hermes* 2000. ³⁸The club finished as champions in 2011-12 season, winning the SJFA North Region Super league title for the

first time. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia , ٢٠١٧ed., s.v. “Hermes FC”(URL:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermes_F.C) Retrieved ٨ March ٢٠١٧.

^{٦٧}Ibid.,

^{٦٨}Micha F. Lindemans, “Ares,” *Encyclopedia Mythica*, ٢٠١٧ ed. (URL:<http://www.pantheon.org/areas/mythology/europe/greek/articles.html>)

Retrieved ٨ March ٢٠١٧.

^{٦٩} Quoted in the Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses, Michael Jordan , ٢nd ed. (US: Facts on File, Inc., ٢٠٠٤), P., ٢٨.

^{٧٠} C. Scott Littleton, ed. *Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology*, vol. ٨, , s.v.”Phobos” (New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, ٢٠٠٥), P., ١١٢١.

^{٧١}Natalie Bulzynsky, Jonathan Shellnut, and Richard Marcus , *The Unofficial Heroes of Olympus Companion: Gods, Monsters, Myths, and What’s in Store for Piper, Jason, and Leo* , (US: Ulysses press, ٢٠١١), P, ٣٧. Also in Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia , ٢٠١٧ed., s.v. “Hermes FC”(URL:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermes_F.C) Retrieved March ٨ ٢٠١٧.

^{٧٢}Ibid.

^{٧٣}Ibid., s.v. “Aris Thessaloniki F.C.” (URL:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aris_Thessaloniki_F.C) Retrieved ١٠ March ٢٠١٧.

^{٧٤}Ibid.,

^{٧٥}Ibid., s.v. “FC Aris Bonnevoie.” (URL:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FC_Aris_Bonnevoie) Retrieved March ١٠, ٢٠١٧.

^{٧٦} Michael Jordan , Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses, ٢nd ed. s.v. “Titans,” (US: Facts on File, Inc., ٢٠٠٤), P., ٣١٦.

^{٧٧}Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia , ٢٠١٧ed., s.v. “Titan (mythology)” (URL:[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titan_\(mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titan_(mythology))) Retrieved March ١٢, ٢٠١٧.

^{٧٨} Simone Payment, *Mythology around the World: Greek Mythology* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group. Inc., ٢٠٠٥), P., ٣٣.

^{٧٩} “Titans,” in The Oxford Companion to the Body, by Helen King (Oxford : Oxford University Press , ٢٠٠١), In Encyclopedia.com, (URL:<http://www.encyclopedia.com/medicine/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/titans>) Retrieved March ١٠, ٢٠١٧.

^{٨٠}Ibid., s.v “Titans in popular culture” (URL:https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titans_in_popular_culture) Retrieved March ١٦, ٢٠١٧.

^{٨١}Ibid., s.v. “Titan (mythology)” , (URL:[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titan_\(mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titan_(mythology))) Retrieved March ١٢, ٢٠١٧.

^{٨٢}Rameca Leary, “Remember the Titans: A Theoretical Analysis, "Journal of Arts and Humanities (JAH), (Volume -٢, No.-٤, May, ٢٠١٣) Retrieved March ١٦, ٢٠١٧.

Work Cited

Brown, Chandruly. *Prophetic Justice*. New York: Xlibris LLC, ebook, ٢٠١٣.

- Bulzynsky, Natalie, Jonathan Shellnut, and Richard Marcus . *The Unofficial Heroes of Olympus Companion: Gods, Monsters, Myths, and What's in Store for Piper, Jason, and Leo*. New York: Ulysses press, ٢٠١١.
- Encyclopedia Britanica, ٢٠١٧ ed. S.v. "Apollo," "GRECO-ROMAN MYTHOLOGY" "Ajax,"
- Encyclopedia of Myths and Legends of the World, ٢٠١٧ ed., S.v. "Ajax"
- Ford, Michel *Heroes, Gods and Monsters Of Ancient Greek Mythology*, e – book : Salariya Book Company Ltd, ٢٠١٢.
- Forta, Arye. *Examining Religions : Judaism*. Oxford :Harcourt Education Limited, ١٩٩٥
- Greek Mythology. ٢٠١٧ ed. S.v. "Ajax,"
- Gulizio, Jonan .*Hermes and e-ma-a ʿ: The Continuity of his Cult from the Bronze Age to the Historical Period*, Texas: University of Texas, ٢٠٠٠.
- Hann, Geoff, Karen Dabrowska, and Tina Townsend – Greaves. *Iraq: The Ancient Sites And Kurdistan*. ٢nd Ed. London: Bradt Travel Guide Ltd, ٢٠١٥.
- Hastings, James. *Dictionary Of The Bible*. Volume V. Hawaii: University Press Of the Pacific, ٢٠٠٤.
- Jordan, Michael. Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses. ٢nd ed. New York: Facts on File, Inc., ٢٠٠٤.
- King, Helen. "Titans" in The Oxford Companion to the Body, ٢٠٠١ ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, ٢٠٠١.
- Lay, M. G. and James E. Vance, *Ways of the World: A History of the World's Roads and of the Vehicles That Used Them*. New York : Rutgers University Press, ١٩٩٢.
- Lead better, Ron. "Hermes" in Encyclopedia Mythica, ٢٠١٧ ed.
- Leary, Rameca. "Remember the Titans: A Theoretical Analysis," Journal of Arts and Humanities (JAH), (Volume -٢, No.-٤, May, ٢٠١٣) Retrieved March ١٦, ٢٠١٧.
- Lindemans, Micha F. "Ares" in Encyclopedia Mythica, ٢٠١٧ ed.
- Littleton, C. Scott Ed. *Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology*. Vol. ٨. New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, ٢٠٠٥.
- Makrides, Vasilios. *Hellenic temples and Christian churches: a concise history of the religious cultures of Greece from antiquity to the present*. New York: NYU Press, ٢٠٠٩.
- Muchnick, Ivrin. *Wrestling Babylon : Pile deriving tales of drugs, sex, death and scandal*. New York: ECW Press, ٢٠٠٧.
- Nauright, John and Charles Parrish. *Sports Around the World :History, Culture, and Practice*. Oxford: ABC – CLIO, ٢٠١٢.
- Payment, Simone. *Mythology around the World: Greek Mythology*. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group. Inc., ٢٠٠٥.
- Schneider, Tammi. *Introduction To Ancient Mesopotamia Religion*. New York: Wm.B.Eerdmom's Publishers Co, ٢٠١١.
- Scott, C. *Gods, Goddesses, And Mythology*. Vol. ٦. New York: Marshall Cavendish, ٢٠٠٥. "Ajax and the Jewish Issue." ajax-usa.com., ٢٠٠٧.
- Tichi, Cecelia. *Embodiment of a Nation: Human Form in American Places*. New York: Harvard University Press, ٢٠٠٤.

Electronic References :

- BBC, "Ancient Greeks: The Olympic Games," (http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/ancient_greeks/the_olympic_games/)
- The Official Website of The Olympic Games : (<https://www.olympic.org/ancient-olympic-games>)
- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, ٢٠١٧ed.