

Analysis on the Prototype of "Phoenix Pattern" From the Perspective of Myth Archetype Criticism

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ABSTRACT

"Phoenix" has always been a symbol of auspiciousness and one of the most familiar mythical creatures for the Chinese people, but its prototype has always been controversial. This article uses Fraser's "The Golden Branch" and Jung's psychoanalytic theory to analyze the literature interpretation of the myth archetype criticism in the 20th century, and explores the phoenix archetype based on the mythological archetype criticism, and concludes that the phoenix is not a real creature. The original prototype of phoenix may be a pheasant bird. The ancients created the decorate patterns with their own imagination. Also, this article analyzes the shapes and characteristics of phoenix in each dynasty, aiming to enhance the sense of belonging to Chinese national culture.

Keywords: mythological prototype, phoenix pattern, modelling, feature

I. INTRODUCTION

The archetypal criticism of mythology in the 20th century occupies an important position in western literary and historical theories. Its author is Frye, a Canadian literary theorist. The theoretical basis mainly comes from Fraser's anthropological theory and Jung's psychoanalysis theory.

A. *The understanding of witchcraft, religion and science in Fraser's "The Golden Bough"*

"The Golden Bough", written by Fraser, introduces the customs of various countries and regions in the world through a large number of historical facts, and determines the process of witchcraft, religion and science. He believes that "the essence of witchcraft is a kind of pseudoscience, an art without any effect, a distorted understanding of the system of natural laws and a wrong guideline for action." In terms of understanding the world, witchcraft and science are similar. Both believe that there are rules to follow in the development of things, and to explore these laws can predict the future. When witchcraft is effective and can become a reality, it becomes science. People explore the laws of nature and accumulate a lot of criteria. The essence of them is the applied science people are talking about now, while the erroneous rules evolve into witchcraft. Fraser's understanding of religion is a supernatural belief or consolation that can influence and control the process of nature and life. As a kind of advanced thinking, literature and art still retains the traces of witchcraft and religion, and there are common ancient phenomena among different cultures.

B. *Jungs' psychoanalytic theory*

In Jung's theory, "prototype" is the expression of "collective unconsciousness". There are two kinds of subconsciousness in human psychology: collective unconsciousness and personal subconsciousness. Among them, the content of the theory of collective subconsciousness is closely related to myths, religions and legends. As a way of expression of "prototype", it is closely connected with myths and other legends. In Jung's research, he noticed that some primitive images may appear in different national cultures, but there is no actual connection between the cultures of these nations, regions and countries. Jung believes that these similar primitive images originate from the deep unconscious psychology of people, which exists in everyone's body. He regards the psychological content represented by these images as collective unconsciousness. The experience of human ancestors has been repeatedly repeated. The original image formed in ethnic memory for generations repeats the accumulation and concentration of hundreds of millions of typical experiences. The original image is the "prototype", which can be expressed through art, myth and other forms.

C. *Frye's myth archetypal criticism*

Mythological archetypal criticism is one of the most important schools of criticism in the 20th century and occupies an important position in western literary and historical theories. Frye absorbed the views of Fraser and Jung, blending the disciplines. He believed that "prototype" was an image, a symbol, a "memory" handed down by a nation. Literature is a "displaced"

myth. The expression of gods and characters in mythology can only exist in "stories", and the expression of this desire is gradually transferred to literary works.

II. ANALYSIS ON THE PHOENIX PROTOTYPE

A. Analysis on phoenix image

Chinese arts and crafts are unique in the world. After thousands of years of creation and precipitation, they have formed their own unique style. The emergence of any subject matter of arts and crafts is directly related to life. The dragon and phoenix patterns, as the ancient and traditional totem themes of the Chinese nation, have their own distinctive features. The emergence of decorative theme is related to the objective existence, but the Phoenix exists in myths and legends, and no one really see it.

In "the Classic of Mountains and Seas", "there is a bird, which looks like a chicken. The whole body is covered with colorful feathers, the name is phoenix, the pattern on the head is in the shape of the word "德", the pattern on the wings is in the shape of the word "义", the pattern on the back is in the shape of the word "礼", and the pattern on the chest is in the shape of the word "仁", and the pattern on the abdomen is the shape of the word "信". It is a symbol of good luck and brings peace and tranquility to people." "Erya · Shi Niao" describes it: "Phoenix is female emperor." Guo Pu notes: "Phoenix is bird of auspiciousness, with the head of a chicken, the neck of a snake, the jaw of a swallow, and the back of a turtle. It is colorful, and is six feet high." It has been a long-standing folk legend in China that there are a hundred birds courting the Phoenix. The dragon and Phoenix are auspicious. There are male Phoenix and female Phoenix. Ge Hong of Jin Dynasty described the Phoenix in "Baopuzi". On the basis of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith, Ge Hong added the colors of gold, wood, water, fire and earth to describe the image of Phoenix more carefully and idealized. According to the ancient description of the Phoenix, it can get the shape of the Phoenix. The Phoenix has the break of a chicken, a slender "snake" neck, the turtle back, and the jaw of a swallow. According to the above characteristics, people can look for creatures with similar characteristics to the Phoenix in biology, and find that there is no bird completely consistent with the Phoenix. There is no Phoenix in the world. It is a combination of the real life and the imagination of the ancients. The ancients took the birds in real life as the embryonic form of the phoenix, coupled with subjective imagination to partially integrate the rare and beautiful birds to form a classic image that has been passed down for thousands of years.

B. Analysis on phoenix prototype

A large number of handicrafts decorated with phoenix patterns have been unearthed in the ruins of Shang Dynasty. In Chinese mythology and legend, tribal leaders are often mysterious, such as the incarnation of an animal. There is a romantic legend among businessmen that "Qi, the ancestor of the merchant, ate a bird's egg, got pregnant and gave birth to him. The merchant is the descendant of "Xuanniao".

"Xuanniao" is the Phoenix. Why do businessmen regard themselves as the descendants of birds? From the present perspective, only large birds with attack power have deterrent power. Can Phoenix, a romantic and beautiful bird, frighten the hostile tribes? Some of the characteristics of the Phoenix may be derived from the yearning for the sky, such as being able to fly in the sky. The ancients believed that their ancestors had kinship with animals, so they believed in them. The essence of this belief was the worship of their ancestors. A large number of bird patterns unearthed in the ruins of Shang Dynasty have the decorative tole, and are also totems.

In reality, many people tend to regard the Phoenix as peacock. The crowns, tail feathers and body posture of male peacocks are very similar to that of Phoenix. However, the record about peacock is in the time after Qin and Han Dynasty. Peacock was introduced into the Central Plains as a rare thing. However, the legend about Phoenix has existed for a long time. Peacock may be used as a reference source for the later image of Phoenix.

According to the description of the Phoenix, the earlier it is, the closer it is to the exact shape of the Phoenix. According to the records in "the Classics of Mountains and Seas", the Phoenix is like a chicken, with colorful colors and tail feathers. Also, it is good at flying, singing and dancing. In contrast, the pheasant Caragana in China is the most similar. The male of the pheasant Caragana is gorgeous and colorful, with golden-and-yellow crest on the top, thick green feathers on the back of the upper body, and golden-and-yellow feathers on the other parts. The back neck is brown-and-orange, with black fan-shaped feathers, the lower body is dark-and-red, and the tail feathers are black-and-brown. The colors of the whole body contrast with each other. Perhaps, when the ancients first saw the golden Caragana, a very beautiful bird, they made the exaggerated imagination due to the low productivity and low level of knowledge in prehistoric society. So, a phoenix was born. With the changes in the social and economic foundations, the ideology has also changed. As a totem for religion and people's worship, the phoenix pattern is gradually refined and concrete on the original basis as time and dynasties change. It slowly blends into the characteristics of other birds and becomes a typical Chinese pattern image.

III. PHOENIX PATTERN

As visual symbols, patterns are ubiquitous in people's daily life. Both in primitive society and modern society, people have the need to "tell stories", so there are folk legends, myths, and proverbs in the history of human activities. There are two situations for the production of symbol patterns: one is formed naturally, which is determined by the environment and nature, and the other is formed in social customs. The rituals and rules produced in society are restricted by ethics and morals, and are expressed in the form of symbols.

A. Phoenix pattern in the Western Zhou Dynasty

The phoenix pattern has a long history. The prototype of the phoenix pattern has been painted on the pottery of primitive society. According to archaeological findings, the phoenix pattern appeared during the Hemudu culture period. The combination of "phoenix" and "sun" in this period shows the primitive society's worship of "sun" and "phoenix". Because of the limitations of the production tools at that time, the phoenix pattern was simple, single and abstract. It was the prototype of the phoenix pattern for future generations. In the Western Zhou Dynasty, the Bronze Age appeared. There were many patterns on the bronze ritual vessels decorated with birds, and the production techniques were embossed. The phoenix patterns are different. Compared with the previous patterns, the biggest change is that the Phoenix images in this period also have great characteristics. The beak is closed downward, the eyes are wide and round, the head is staring up, the tail feathers are long and curly, the lines are more used, the lines are winding and smooth, and the overall modeling is strict. The Phoenix pattern is usually the main body of decoration, which is filled with patterns of clouds and lighting. It is clear in primary and secondary and enhanced in decoration, which adds mystery and worship to the god of Phoenix.

B. Phoenix pattern in Qin and Han dynasties

After the Spring and Autumn period, Qin Dynasty had completed the grand unification, and the phoenix pattern was improved in material application, decoration and manufacturing technology.

The Phoenix image in Qin Dynasty is more specific than that of the previous dynasties. The realistic style of Phoenix in Qin Dynasty makes the Phoenix more like the common birds in life. In this period, a large number of Phoenix appeared in lacquerware. Compared with the strict Phoenix modeling on bronze ware, the lacquer modeling drawn by brush is more fluent and lively. The outstanding feature in modeling is that the crown is behind the top, dividing into one long and one short. There are two tails: one tail feather bends downward, and the other is divided into two strands upward. And

feathers are expressed with smooth lines. It has not made carefully decorated details, but the modeling is accurate and the posture is high-spirited.

The shape of the phoenix in the Han Dynasty continued the Qin system, which can be divided into two types. The first is abstract, the abstract phoenix pattern uses deformed lines to shape the outline of the phoenix as a whole or part, and the overall shape is mostly an "S" shape. It has a sense of rhythm and is more vivid than a regular circle. It is often seen in jade ornaments worn by nobles. The second is to be more concrete. The body and tail feathers in the Phoenix pattern are more detailed, and the differences between neck and body are more obvious. The beak contains red beads, and the posture strides over or spreads its wings high, which is full of vitality. Lines gradually move closer to specific images from simple lines, with their own imagination. For example, the tail feathers of Phoenix are depicted as flower buds to be released, adding romantic color to the mystery.

C. Phoenix pattern in Tang Dynasty

Buddhism rose in China in the Wei and Jin Dynasties, and then affected the development of traditional Chinese culture. In the Tang Dynasty, Buddhism was integrated with Chinese national culture. The openness and inclusiveness made the Phoenix pattern enter a mature stage, with more diverse forms. In this period, the phoenix pattern had more forms of expression and became more and more concrete, and the shape was more like the shape of "bird". As a decorative pattern, the scope of application was more and more extensive. The phoenix pattern of Tang Dynasty absorbed the pattern of previous dynasties to make the development. The rise of "flower twining" makes "flower-phoenix pattern" replace the pattern "clouds and lightning" in pre-Qin dynasty, and the combination of curling grass pattern and peony appears together. The shape of Phoenix is further evolved, and the mouth with "concentric knot" and "flower and grass branch" appear in pairs, symbolizing happiness. The composition of the pattern adopts the structure of rotation and loop. The patterns of phoenix in the Tang Dynasty are related to clothing, food, housing, transportation and other aspects. The whole shape is full and high-spirited. The head, crown, neck, body, claw and tail are described in detail. The tail feather is described with thin lines, and there is no longer a large blank. The tail extends out and combines with the patterns of flowers and plants to form a curly grass shape, adding the sense of beauty. The Tang Dynasty made the phoenix patterns gradually integrated into the folk, and the opening and prosperity of the Tang Dynasty further developed the phoenix patterns and made them more magnificent.

D. Phoenix pattern in Ming and Qing dynasties

During the Ming Dynasty, capitalism sprouted and arts and crafts flourished and developed. During the Qing Dynasty, Chinese arts and crafts were sold overseas, and the development of phoenix pattern reached its peak. Both the court craft and the folk craft all have the meaning of "good luck". The phoenix patterns in the Ming Dynasty inherited the styles of the previous dynasties. In the Qing Dynasty, they added decorative themes such as scenery, figures and plants on the basis of the Ming Dynasty. The patterns of the Qing Dynasty were mainly colorful. "The mass of phoenix" is a style with unique characteristics of the times. At that time, the rulers defined "mass dragons" and "mass phoenix" as special dress system. Later, it was used more and more, and then evolved into 24 phoenix. The Phoenix became round, which was called "mass phoenix". In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the description of Phoenix is more detailed, the tail feathers are flame like, the scale feathers of wings are very specific, and the overall expression is delicate and soft, which is fascinating.

IV. CONCLUSION

According to the criticism of mythological archetypes, mythology is also a metaphorical world. By tracing the phoenix patterns, people can understand the shape of the phoenix and trace its prototype. There are many mythological stories in China, which contain the imagination of the ancients. Imagination is evolved on an objective basis. They are not abstract thinking generated out of nothing. For the prototype of phoenix, people can understand the biology and culture of a region and a country step by step, which is a process of tracing the roots. The evolution of the phoenix pattern has a penetrating meaning for people to understand Chinese traditional culture, the change of dynasties, the aesthetics of the folk and the times, and the artistic creation.

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