



Compare the Similarities and Differences of Sacrificial Activities Between Ancient China and Ancient Greece-Taking Iliad and Nine Songs as Example

Runtian Yang^(✉)

Tianjin New Channel School, Tianjin 300041, China
tjwangjing@xhd.cn

Abstract. The contrast between Eastern and Western literature is one of the key topics in today's research. Researchers have found progress in Nine Songs and the Eliad culture. However, there is still a lack of unified interpretation of the issue of image contrast studies. Therefore, this paper mainly studies the difference between Nine Songs and Iliad from the perspective of sacrifice. By collecting the data related to sacrifice and analyzing the data from multiple angles, this paper explores the sacrificial activities, characteristics and images of gods in the East and West. Studies have shown that the starting point of Chinese and ancient Greek sacrifices was different: one worshipped divine power, the other worshipped grace, but both sides imagined this sacrifice to supernatural powers or incarnating them as gods. The main difference between the Eastern and Western gods is that the gods in Greek mythology have distinct personalities, no ascetic factors, and very little mysticism. The beauty of Greek mythology lies in the fact that the gods still have a destiny, can still be trapped by love, and do bad things for their own benefit; Chinese mythology has a very bright moral spirit, and the great gods are not cannibalistic fireworks, there is no human passion in the god characteristics. Therefore, there is still a great difference between the Eastern and Western sacrificial cultures, with many interesting aspects and images to explore.

Keywords: Sacrifice · Nine Songs · Iliad · Gods

1 Introduction

Sacrifice is a very ancient ritual. Its origin can be traced back to thousands of years ago, carrying the human pursuit of the supernatural and worship. And so far, the supernatural has been around, so the ritual has survived. This is a very mysterious area, which can start with the human ancestors, knowing their understanding and interpretation of nature at that time. Many predecessors have studied religious sacrifice and mythology in the Iliad and Nine Songs of elegies of Chu. However, comparing religious sacrifice and mythology in the same period still needs further research and exploration. This gap needs to be filled because the cultural differences between China and the West are the

root of the continuous contradictions between nations. The world has become a whole, and promoting cultural exchanges between China and the West has become a hot spot of the times, which can reduce contradictions between countries and bring lasting peace to the world. The author will go back to ancient China and ancient Greece, looking for similarities and differences between their religions and myths and the key to cultural differences. This article mainly uses the Chinese and Western culture as well as Freud's psychoanalysis theory to study Achilles and The Great Lord of Fate and compare their similarities and differences. From the perspective of the protagonist, it can be effectively understood their psychological activities so as to more accurately study the information and culture that the two works want to convey to human beings; What was people's attitude towards the sacrificial culture at that time and what influence did sacrificial culture have on them. The author will compare the similarities and differences between the great lord of fate from Nine Songs of elegies of the Chu and the Greeks' sacrifices to the gods before the war in the Iliad. The great lord of fate refers to the god in charge of life and death in Nine Songs. This poem mainly describes his majesty, loyalty to duty and holding the power of life and death. At the same time, it also reflects Qu Yuan's attitude towards life and death and personal fate, as well as his reverence for the great lord of fate. In the Iliad, they prayed to god to bless the victory of the war, so people sacrificed sheep and cattle to god. After provoking the gods, Agamemnon even offered his daughter to them in the hope of their forgiveness and understanding, which reflected god's ability to dominate everything in the world, so there was a comparison between them. In Nine Songs, the gods played by the wizards, their songs, dances and actions all have certain plot and emotional trends, and the sacrificial activities are orderly one after another. The performances of the wizards simulating gods have more embellish and greater clarity, which not only entertains the god but also shows a tendency to entertain human beings. "Therefore, Nine Songs is a large-scale ancient mythological musical drama, which symbolizes the gradual dramatization of the original song and dance" [1]. It is more about the state of harmony between man and god. "The Greeks believed that worship must be carried out through specific rituals of worship such as festivals, competitions, oracles, and sacrifices" [2]. Fraser says the ancient Greeks "endeavored to coax and appease the stubborn, irascible and capricious gods through gentle obsequiousness such as prayer and sacrifice" [3]. The gods of ancient Greece were superior and dominated everything in the world. When angry, they need the human sacrifice of cattle and sheep to calm their anger. In other words, man has been a pleasing god. This is very different from the sacrificial culture in ancient China. Therefore, this paper intends to explore the influence of different gods on human life at that time and what caused these differences by studying ancient sacrificial cultures in different regions. This paper will not just stay on the surface but will dig deeper. Why does the image of sacrifice frequently appear in the text? What does god mean to a human? Why do the ancient Greeks approach the "madness" of sacrifice? Plato thought it would be better "to have a festival every day, so that at least every day one of the magistrates, on behalf of the city's citizens, would make sacrifices to some god or demigod." The sacrifice of Homer is even more numerous. This article will explore this topic in detail.

2 Description of the Sacrifice in the Iliad

2.1 The Sacrifice of Iliad

In ancient Greece, sacrifices to gods or religious festivals were as important to the city as wars, is also a necessary ritual before the start of a battle. In the first book of the Iliad, to win the war, the Greeks offered sacrifices to Apollo, asking for his protection: “Thy beauteous fane, or on the altar burned. The fat acceptable of bulls or goats, 50 Grant my petition. With thy shafts avenge” [4]. Because the Greeks believed that only by appeasing the gods and satisfying their needs could they receive the gods’ help and protection and win the war. In the eyes of the Greek gods, the sacrifices people made to them were supposed to be impermanent. So that Poseidon, the god of the sea, was delighted to see sacrificed at his own altar at Helikneus. Zeus’s reason for favoring Hector was that “he has never been short of offerings, and my altar has never been short of the same feast: libations of wine and meat, which are our due gifts [5].” It is human nature to seek comfort and reliance on supernatural forces. This instinct to seek comfort in the presence of god is especially evident when one is unsure of oneself and the opponent is strong.

2.2 The Image of a Deity Worshipped in the Iliad and the Relationship Between God and Human Beings

The god was considered supernatural incarnations, and they were a sacred and inviolable image in the eyes of the Greeks. They control everything in the world as well as victory in war. This also leads to people’s fear of god. In the Iliad, Agamemnon was the commander of the Greek army; because he offended the goddess, the sea hung up the waves, and the army could not start. Agamemnon was told by the prophet that the only way to change the wind was to sacrifice his daughter to the goddess. Agamemnon made up his mind to sacrifice his daughter in order to shoulder his responsibility as commander-in-chief and serve Greece. This is a remarkable indication of god’s desire to control people and the difference between the status of man and god. God is always in control, and people can only get what they want if they please god. The Greek worship of god is not in doubt. It also shows that god is cruel and needs people to obey him. There is a strong homomorphic color between god and man. Although the gods had human weaknesses and weaknesses, they still represented justice, light, wisdom, courage and beauty, which were exactly what the ancient Greeks were yearning for and reflected the highest social ideal and life value they pursued. The ancient Greeks reflected the human life and existence form in reality to the god and also reflected their ideal to the god.

2.3 The Figure of Achilles

Sacrifice expresses the worship of supernatural power, and supernatural power is imagined by human beings as the image of god, so the power of god must be more than that of man. In ancient Greece, the power of the great god was embodied in the child born of the union of god and man, so the child was both divine and human. Moreover, Achilles is the best representative in the Iliad. First of all, Achilles was cruel and aggressive, especially

when his friend Patroclus was killed by the Trojans. Achilles went on a killing spree, causing the bodies to pile up. However, at the same time, Achilles was kind. It showed when Hector's father came alone to his camp, knelt down and kissed his hand to let Achilles allow his son's body back to him. When Achilles learned that Hector was the last son of the old king, he immediately cursed the war and sent Hector's body back to his father. This was the ultimate goodness of his character, and like his evil, it was a childlike kindness that came from the heart without accident – he was “really a gentle, kind, respectful, considerate young man” [6]. In Freud's psychoanalysis, he believes that the id is composed of instinct, impulse, and desire located in the subconscious, which is the biological aspect of personality and follows the “pleasure principle” [7]. Moreover, it shows up very well in Achilles. He was a self-centered man who would quit the war in anger when Agamemnon took his beloved slave girl but would not hesitate to return to help the Greeks when his friends were killed. Achilles always instinctively releases the mental energy or lowers the tension directly and thus obtains happy satisfaction. It has no sense of right or wrong in terms of demand satisfaction and does not consider moral constraints. Therefore, the id occupies a large part of him. Achilles embodied human instinct more, so it can be found that the gods worshipped and sacrificed in ancient Greece were more incarnations of human beings themselves. Thus, the ancient Greek worship of god, in a different sense, is the worship of man himself and of the energy and power contained in his own body.

3 Description of the Sacrifice in Nine Songs

3.1 The Sacrifice of Nine Songs

Qu Yuan's “Nine Songs” is a series of pomes that describes a scene in which the king of Chu led a sorcerer to worship the gods of his ancestors. In ancient Chinese people's view, the main function of sacrifice is to communicate with god through material offerings, pray for blessings and disasters, and seek god's protection. From the content of “Nine Songs”, the Sacrificial rites of Chu can be roughly divided into three parts: welcoming the god, entertaining the god and sending the god. The first part is mainly about preparing meat and wine for god. The second part is to entertain the gods. In ancient, wizards undertook the mission of communicating between man and god. During the sacrificial ceremony, these wizards tried their best to dress up as gods in terms of clothes, appearance and movement, singing and dancing to the audience. However, from this appearance, people watching often regarded the supernatural apparition of wizards as the god attached to them or regarded them as gods directly, so the witches became the embodiment of gods available for viewing. The last part ended with the sound of drums. People celebrated the successful end of the sacrifice by passing flowers to each other and dancing. Therefore, the Chinese sacrificial ceremony reflected in Nine Songs is to show respect to the gods, mainly hoping that the gods will bless agriculture, the next year's good weather and the family prosperity.

3.2 The Image of a Deity Worshipped in Nine Songs and the Relationship Between God and Human Beings

The god depicted in Nine Songs is noble, elegant and majestic, with all the good qualities that people wish them to have. The Great Lord of Fate from Nine Songs created the image of a serious and mysterious god in charge of life span. When describing duties, “Your life or death, oh! is in my hands. I soar up high, oh! Serene in flight; I ride on air, oh! on shade and light. I will speed up, oh! with our lord divine” [8]. It can be seen in the pretensions and authority of the great lord of fate in the presence of mortals. Through the reflection of the personality of the great lord of fate, it is more like the fear and helplessness of nature in the natural environment of life, aging, illness and death in ancient times [9]. In addition, it also describes the love between man and god. The elegy of love between man and god, it truly shows the depression and pain of people in love in real life. It naturally interweaved people’s thoughts and feelings in the poem so that the image of the gods became full of human touch and close to real life, thus subverting the solemn and dignified image of the gods in the past and expressing the true feelings of the people. This makes the image of god in the poem flesh and blood to achieve the unity of man and god. The relationship between god and man in Nine Songs is unity between heaven and man, a state of harmony and no conflict between them. People make wishes to god, and god gives blessings.

3.3 The Figure of the Great Lord of Fate

In ancient China, the worship of gods in ancient China had a strong religious significance, and they believed that gods could bless their descendants and also it could befall evil. Therefore, human beings should respect them in order to maintain family peace. As a result, it contains the potential humanistic spirit [10]. Gods are beautiful images, and their power or other ways are far more than men. The same is true of the virtues of the gods, who are considered good and great. The Great lord of fate is a god that is closely related to humankind. He is in charge of good and evil, killing and death. If the ancestors were in the activity of offering sacrifices to gods, the sacrifices offered to the Monarch of the East (the first god to be sacrificed in the nine songs) were just to cope with it. So when sacrificing to the Great Lord of Fate, it is absolutely reverent and respectful. It also reflects the ancestors’ reverence for life, good and evil, and fate. So because he has a close connection with the human race, so his appearance is necessarily very stylish and high-profile. He made a dragon as a horse, a cloud as a cart and left with the wide open gate of heaven. The status of the god in the Heavenly Palace may not be very high, but for the human world, controlling everyone’s life and death, then the power can be said to be great. In that case, his appearance was larger and more spectacular than the appearance of the Monarch of the East. It is a wonderful image of him as a god in control of life and death. In Freudian psychoanalysis, the superego is the moral value part of the personality. It represents the ideal rather than the reality and requires perfection rather than practicality or pleasure. The superego forces the ego to know things not as they are but as it subjectively thinks they should be. The superego is developed from a part of the self and is the highest state of life. It is well displayed in the image of the Great Lord of Fate. The Great Lord of Fate in Nine Songs is the imagination of a perfect personality

of Qu Yuan, so in Chinese sacrifices, gods are divine, far exceeding human nature. It is not based on an understanding of human nature to imagine and shape the image of god. On the contrary, it is by imagining an image that transcends human beings, so Chinese gods are all high above, meaning the status or power of gods, and more, which cannot be achieved by human beings, so gods have only divinity.

4 Comparison of Nine Songs and Iliad

The ancient Greeks in the Iliad sacrificed mainly to seek victory in war. Waging war and asking for something requires sacrificing to god. Cattle and sheep were used in sacrifices to the gods. The sacrificial humans were different. They were more often the daughters of a leader. Agamemnon's eldest daughter was sacrificed to Artemis, the goddess of hunting, just before the battle. However, instead of being killed, she became a priest to Artemis, the goddess of hunting. Before the Great War, each side of the war would sacrifice to the gods, asking them to help them win the war. Interestingly, god never refuses to offer but already has in mind a judgment of victory or defeat. So a lot of the time, god acts a bit like a rogue, "just taking money and doing nothing." God has the seven emotions and six sensory pleasures as human beings and does not pay much attention to moral education [11]. As for the Nine Songs, it rarely mentions the use of people to sacrifice, but more alcohol and food as a tribute, and the sacrifice is very complicated. It indicates that the agricultural civilization of China originated earlier, so the gods of agriculture were worshipped more, hoping to bless the coming year with good weather and good harvest. After the harvest, they are willing to give to god because they think it is god's work. At that time, the state of Chu was rich in food and clothing, and the people had no worries. It was not necessary to sacrifice people to the gods. This also shows in disguise that the ancient Chinese gods were not combative, as they were quiet, upright, peaceful and serene. It will not be like the ancient Greek god warlike, willing to control, win or lose the war on the mortal world, or even participate in it. This is the essential difference between the two. In addition, the gods of ancient Greece contain strong homomorphic colors of god and man. The gods and heroes in Greek mythology are "the unity of God and man". They have human shape, human character, and human emotion [12]. It shows that gods have the same passions and desires, weaknesses and needs as men do -- they clash, they quarrel, they envy each other; They have lust, cheat with mortals, and have children with them; They have the pursuit of delicious food, enjoy the pleasure of feast, wine and music; They occasionally challenged the authority of Zeus. They are also biased, selfish and stubborn. The ancient Greeks reflected human life and existence from reality to god and also reflected their ideal of god. They did not create the world; they lived in it, giving sustenance to the prayers of men, giving hope to the world. In ancient China, the gods were pure, upright, and selfless. In the Nine Songs, the gods are very beautiful; they come from Qu Yuan's inner image of a beautiful world. What is more, Qu Yuan hopes that the external world is like his heart. Thus, the heroes in Chinese mythology are very heroic, as if there are no shortcomings; therefore, he wrote that the gods do not have the desire to control people. However, the common point between the two is that the ancient Chinese and the ancient Greeks did not believe in a single god, and it also carried the faith of the people. They become people's spiritual

sustenance, a way for humans to yearn for beautiful things. At the same time, they are all fictional or exaggerated human characters. It is an ancient human interpretation of the supernatural.

What is important about Achilles is his extreme individualism and his extreme sensitivity to personal honor and dignity, which is evident in book 1. The Greek commander Agamemnon took the daughter of a priest as an enslaved person and finally managed to get the priest to forgive him, but he did not forget to deprive Achilles of his slave. Achilles felt insulted. In the end, he withdrew from the war in anger, reluctant to fight even as the Greek union was losing ground. Moreover, despite the oracle, Achilles went into battle largely for the sake of dignity and honor. This reflects his extreme importance to honor: personal dignity is not allowed to be violated, even if the sacrifice of life is to get honor. Finally, because his friend Patroclus was killed by the Trojan commander Hector, he returned to the battlefield out of the mind of revenge for his friend. So, the *id* is clearly embodied in him, and he always starts from himself, allowing nature to override reason. In comparison, Nine Songs described in the Great Lord of Fate is a dignified, mysterious, loyal to duty, supervising the good and evil of people and holding the power of life and death. The emphasis is on the ruthless, pretentious and superior character of the Great Lord of Fate. The image of justice and authority of the Great Lord of Fate shows divinity, characteristic of the human imagination of the divine. Qu Yuan described him as noble and immaculate. What is more, it can be seen that the power of these gods and their place in the hearts of the ancients, and the spiritual state and yearning for beauty in ancient times. Unlike Achilles, their divinity occupied most of their bodies. The unattainable perfection of man is successfully manifested in him. What is more, unlike Achilles' remarkable ego, the Great Lord of Fate's superego occupies most of it. The primary duty of the superego is to direct the ego to act in accordance with the principle of supreme goodness by posing as a moral conscience to limit and suppress the instinctive impulses of the self. This is the biggest difference between them. What they have in common is that they are both incarnations of the supernatural. Achilles is the embodiment of the power of god in the human body, and the Great Lord of Fate is the god that is worshipped by human beings. In addition to this, they were men of great ability. Achilles being the son of god was powerful in his own right, and the Great Lord of Fate is the god who controls life and death.

5 Conclusion

Through research, this paper finds that the *Iliad* and Nine Songs have significant differences in the image of sacrifice. This is not only in the sacrificial ceremony; more is reflected in their different beliefs, the image of the god and the protagonist or author of the difference. Therefore, this paper studies the differences between *Iliad* and Nine Songs and discusses them from many angles. The main contribution of this paper is to explore the similarities and differences between the image of sacrifice in ancient China and ancient Greece, which is conducive to promoting cultural exchanges between the East and the West. The world is now in peaceful exchanges, and mutual benefit has become the mainstream of this time. Only by fully understanding other countries' cultures can it be tolerant and understand other countries, and the world can be at peace.

Whether current research compares other images and stylistic structures in Iliad and Nine Songs, future research should pay more attention to the content represented by different images in poetry and the emotion the poet wants to express.

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