

Research on Chinese Dragon Totem Art

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Abstract: The Chinese nation has a long history and a rich traditional national culture. In Chinese culture, the dragon is a unique art product of China, which is closely related to the culture and history of the nation, forming the most widely spread and influential "dragon culture". The dragon is the soul of the Chinese nation and the symbol of the great tradition of the Chinese nation. The dragon is a symbol of the cohesion of the Chinese nation, which has been endowed with a noble image and eternal vitality, and has been transformed into a god in people's hearts who can call the winds and the rains, signify misfortune, and be good at transforming the heavens. The image of the dragon also penetrates into all levels of social life, the beauty of the dragon's majesty and dignity, the ideals and spirit of the people, and become a rich cultural symbols and hard to part with the feelings connected to the blood, forming a very rich and valuable national cultural heritage.

Keywords: Totem; Chinese Dragon; Culture; Art; Traditional Culture.

1. Introduction

Primitive totems are one of the oldest forms of culture and art in the world, and the system of totem worship is an early prototype of religion. The development of human art cannot be separated from animals, and primitive human beings have complex emotions towards animals, which they revered and feared, and were the totems of human tribes, so many human activities were learned after being inspired by animals. In the early social production and social life, the primitive forefathers attributed the origin of the tribe to the divine power of totem animals and plants with primitive sorcery and imagination, thus consciously and unconsciously creating this mysterious art and leaving traceable footprints for the future generations through various totem cultures. The creation and development of totems, their contents and forms all reflect the pulsation and rhythm of life at all times, reflecting the early ontological values of the primitive forefathers and their search for and transcendence of the infinite possibilities of life.

The Chinese nation has a long history and a rich traditional national culture. In Chinese culture, the dragon is a unique art product of China, which is closely related to the culture and history of the nation, forming the most widely spread and influential "dragon culture". The dragon is the soul of the Chinese nation and the symbol of the great tradition of the Chinese nation. The dragon is a symbol of the cohesion of the Chinese nation, which has been endowed with a noble image and eternal vitality, and has been transformed into a god in people's hearts who can call the winds and the rains, signify misfortune, and be good at transforming the heavens. The image of the dragon also penetrates into all levels of social life, the beauty of the dragon's majesty and dignity, the ideals and spirit of the people, and become a rich cultural symbols and hard to part with the feelings connected to the blood, forming a very rich and valuable national cultural heritage.

2. Formation of the Chinese Dragon Totem

2.1. Origin of the Chinese Dragon

In China's long traditional culture, dragons have always

been present and influenced the development of Chinese history and culture. From the ancient times, people have worshipped and honored the dragon. The spread and development of dragon culture has deeply influenced the history and culture of the Chinese land, and it is also a rich and valuable spiritual wealth created by the industrious and intelligent primitive ancestors, which shows the deep affection between the Chinese nation and the dragon, and the admiration and worship of the dragon culture on the national pride generated in the hearts of the Chinese people; in people's imagination, the dragon's athletic posture, boldness and gallop, and the dragon's body condenses the strength and beauty, and the dragon's face is full of wisdom and power, and this is the dragon. The face of the dragon is full of wisdom and power, which is the image of the dragon that hundreds of millions of people are in awe of. In our step by step into the world of the dragon, one after another unsolved mystery comes along: the dragon, in the end, where does it come from? Where does it come from?

About the origin of the dragon, from ancient times to the present, I do not know how many literati scholars have carried out detailed examination, we synthesize the history, archaeology, cultural relics and other aspects of the basis for Mr. Wen Yiduo put forward the "totem merger" has the greatest impact. The interpretation of the word "totem" is a symbol. Totem is to say that the Chinese primitive ancestors think that some kind of creatures in the natural world and their own blood relations. It is a clan tribe or several clans and tribes of common belief in the flag and symbols. In ancient clan society, the clansmen regarded the sun, moon, stars, wind, clouds, thunder and lightning in nature and the living and non-living things on the ground as having gods and spirits. Each clan or tribe took one of these deities as the patron saint of their own tribe or clan, as a clan standard and symbol, and also as a spiritual support, so they worshipped it and worshipped it, which is totem worship. In addition to depicting images of nature, most of the totems depicted snakes, tigers, wolves, eagles and other ferocious animals and birds. Because of the merger of clans or tribes at that time, when a powerful tribe or clan annexed another tribe or clan, it absorbed the most powerful part of the totem of the other tribe or clan into its own totem, so that the image formed was

no longer a real animal, but became a virtual comprehensive creature. The dragon was then considered a totem symbol, a virtual creature imagined by the people, because it was a comprehensive creature that was formed by combining many different animals in the living world. Even in the literature, the dragon totem has been considered to be somewhat like a horse, somewhat like a dog, sometimes like a fish and like a bird, like a deer, like a snake, and so on.

2.2. Totemism

If we sort out the lineage of the "totem theory", the first theory is that the dragon is formed by the snake. Snake's fast forward and fatal aggressiveness to people, people are surprised and afraid, and then as a god, as a spirit that can avoid all disasters, for example, lightning in the sky, after a flash of white light, it is a downpour of rain. Lightning is very much like a snake that instantly flies through the air and zigzags forward. Thunder and lightning can cause fire, so the snake can swallow smoke and fire, in this way, the snake has become a spirit in the hearts of people, it became the master of the totem, other ferocious beasts and fowls can be attached to it, and so the dragon came into being. The ancestors of the Chinese nation, Fuxi and Nuwa, who are related to the dragon, are heroes that people admire. Their images were mythologized by the primitive ancestors as Fuxi with a human head and a snake's body and Nuwa with a human head and a snake's body, which shows that snakes were highly regarded in the consciousness of the ancestors in the primitive society. This shows that snakes were highly admired and worshipped in the consciousness of the ancestors.

The second theory: dragons are formed by silkworms. Legend has it that in ancient times, silkworms were called "holy worms", and dragons evolved from the bodies of silkworms. Historical records of women called "silkworm moth", men called "silkworm", the Xia Dynasty, the silkworm is also known as the "dragon", and its descendants deified it, in the head of the silkworm produced two horns! Later, it added claws, scales and whiskers, which became the image of the dragon that was formed out of the objective image.

From the above two sayings we can easily see, as a dragon totem, and was deified totem, it has its distinctive features. According to the evidence: it began as a clan totem, and then we worship it, believe in it, honored as a "deity", in the hearts of the primitive forefathers of the everlasting dragon. Was in the primitive ancestors as a totem worship, so the image of the dragon has been depicted by the world more deified, it can achieve the purpose of "avoidance of harm", primitive people believe that the dragon totem can avoid all the disasters in the world; the dragon has a deification of the color, has been our primitive ancestors of the generations of worship, can represent the family's prosperity It can represent the prosperity of the family and the happiness of the people. According to the literature, there is a powerful Xia tribe in the Central Plains, and the dragon is its totem, which they call themselves the "Dragon Tribe". In the archaeological artifacts, found a large number of artifacts unearthed in the early Xia and pre-Hsia period, among which the excavated colored pottery dragon plate above the dragon's form of thick and simple, vivid, is a snake as the main body, and a combination of sheep, crocodiles and other animals, part of the characteristics of the composition of the complex of the totem.

About the creation of the dragon, from ancient times to the present day, we have different views. But after continuous examination, we are closer to the view that the dragon is the

image of the Chinese people, is a collection of many kinds of creatures in the natural world. The reason why the dragon has become the worship of the Chinese children, because the dragon has long been the object of worship, it has been endowed with supernatural vitality. Starting from the totem worshipped by Chinese people, tracing the root of national cultural life, which concentrates people's strong ideological feelings, national beliefs and aspirations, the origin of the dragon is also the origin of the spirit of the Chinese nation.

3. Development of the Dragon Totem

Along with the history of Chinese civilization, the dragon image has always been influenced by the historical background and characteristics of the era in which it is located. From the Shang Dynasty and the Zhou Dynasty to the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, the image of the dragon broke through the traditional constraints and accomplished its changing shapes; from the Qin and Han Dynasty to the Sui and Tang Dynasty, the elements constituting the image of the dragon gradually began to be completed; from the Song Dynasty to the Ming and Qing Dynasty, the dragon pattern, as a kind of decorative element, gained a great popularity among the imperial family. The change and development of dragon image is also the sublimation of national tradition and national connotation. The development of the dragon totem is divided into the following three stages.

3.1. Ancient Dragon

The first stage is before the Spring and Autumn period, known as the ancient dragon period. The dragons of this period generally showed the basic crawling habits of animals, with a single composition of body forms, synthesizing the features of the body of a snake and the head of a wild beast, which formed the characteristics of primitive reptiles. But their forms are very rich and grotesque. There are many variations in their forms, for example, some forms with sharp horns, some with toothed horns, and some without horns; long snouts, curled snouts, no snouts; there are also many fins, including one fin and no fins; some forms show one foot, and there are front and back with and without feet, and from the images we can see that they have retained the basic characteristics of the primitive animals that are simple and ferocious.



Figure 1. Ancient Dragon

3.2. Medieval Dragon

The second stage is from the Warring States period to the Tang Dynasty, known as the medieval dragon period, this period of the dragon in the form of a great change in the dragon body of the primitive reptile features gradually disappeared, the form of the dragon has been the emergence of the flying shape. The body shape of the dragon was mostly S-shaped, which appeared strong and steady. The dragon's body structure for the animal body, the head began to appear hair, section hair, dragon horn from the cow horn into antlers, began to appear fork, and appeared sheep beard, the dragon's style has become a formidable. From the Han Dynasty unearthed portrait bricks in the form of the dragon can be seen, the dragon head and neck, imposing; Anji Bridge in

Zhao County, Hebei Province on the Sui Dynasty dragon pattern, the dragon's head looking back toward the sky, the dragon's eyes look angrily at the hair fluttering, the dragon's body want to stretch out, the momentum of the vigorous; and the form of the dragon on the mural painting of the Tang Dynasty tombs, the dragon's tail and paws have the characteristics of the tiger's body, they hold their heads high and long whistling, showing the ferociousness of the momentum. Although at this stage, the dragon in the Middle Ages in the form of a greater progress, but the common features of the form of the head and neck, leaping into the air, imposing, it also shows that the dynasty in a strong and powerful and Yi Xia culture fusion of the history of the great.



Figure 2. Medieval Dragon

3.3. Modern Dragon

The third stage is after the Song Dynasty, known as the modern dragon period. During this period, the dragon's form has formed a fixed pattern, the dragon's characteristics for the body sinuous, soaring in the air, the dragon's head on the horn from the short horn into a long horn, and there is a fork, but has lost the dragon's ferocious momentum and mysterious apotheosis of the Middle Ages Dragon period, into no offensive, showing a dignified and tolerant bosom. The details of the dragon are characterized by the upper jaw that changes from curling to straightening, the mouth of the dragon becomes shallow, the body shape is sinuous and the whiskers and hair are flowing, showing the beautiful and harmonious figure of the modern dragon, which is of high artistic and cultural value. This form of the dragon has continued to the Qing Dynasty for more than seven hundred years, which represents the national culture and spirit of the Chinese people, and the end of a historical era.



Figure 3. Modern Dragon

4. The Spiritual Connotation of the Chinese Dragon Totem

In feudal society, the rulers used the dragon's deterrent effect and people's worship of psychology, to the "true dragon son of heaven", claiming that the divine right of kings, so as to exercise the supremacy of the ruler's imperial power. With the establishment of new China, the dragon totem is no longer a symbol of autocratic imperial power, but the precipitation of thousands of years of history and culture of the Chinese nation, is the emotional bond of the Chinese people united with each other, is to inspire us to strive for upward spiritual power.

4.1. Meaning of the Western Dragon Totem

Dragons are large, magical legendary creatures that appear in the folklore of many cultures around the world. Beliefs about dragons vary greatly from region to region, but since the mid-medieval period, dragons in Western culture have usually been depicted as winged, horned, fire-breathing

creatures. Western dragons are legendary creatures of evil, and the dragon represents an evil symbol of greed and destruction. Dragons in Eastern cultures are usually depicted as wingless, four-legged, serpentine creatures with above-average intelligence. The common characteristics of dragons are usually a hybrid of feline, reptilian, mammalian, and avian features. Scholars believe that giant crocodiles that are extinct or migrating most closely resemble dragons, especially those encountered in forested or swampy areas, and that they are likely the template for the modern Asian dragon image.

4.2. Cohesion and Solidarity

The evolution of the dragon totem is closely related to the history of the development of Chinese culture, which has witnessed the continuous expansion of the frontiers by our ancestors, the development and growth of the loose and weak tribes into a powerful nation, and the process of the various ethnic groups struggling together for a common goal and gradually integrating and uniting as a whole. As a participant and witness of the great integration of the Chinese nation, the dragon totem is not only an immortal spiritual symbol and cultural icon of the Chinese nation, but also a strong emotional bond between the Chinese people.

4.3. Harmony and Inclusion

From the point of view of the graphic elements of the Dragon Totem, the image of the dragon is formed by the integration of various animals and celestial phenomena, which are distinctly different and yet appropriately integrated with each other, artistically embodying a perfect and harmonious unity. Just like all things in the universe, although they are very different, they can be interdependent and constrained by each other, coexisting harmoniously in the same world. The Chinese often say "harmony is precious" and "all things prosper in a harmonious family", and harmony is precisely the realm that the Chinese have been pursuing in their dealings with the world from ancient times to the present.

4.4. Progress and Endeavor

The ancients believed that wind and rain, lightning and thunder and other natural imagery are all the will of heaven, and the dragon, as a great deity, has the power to sow rain to nourish all things. And the ruler as the son of the sky and the embodiment of the dragon, only up to the will of heaven, down to the hearts of the people, virtues and deeds, and strive to rule, in order to wind and rain, the country and the people in peace. Therefore, the dragon totem also embodies a kind of virtue and the enterprising spirit of upward mobility.

4.5. Development and Innovation

The image of the dragon totem, which is widely spread today, is not an overnight achievement, but has gone through a long process of historical development and evolution. The earliest dragon totem was only in the form of a simple snake, and then it was innovated on the basis of the development of history in various dynasties until the Ming and Qing Dynasties, when it slowly developed into a mature and beautiful form. Therefore, the dragon totem also embodies the spirit of the times of development and innovation.

5. Conclusion

As a typical image that expresses the traditional cultural characteristics of the Chinese nation, along with the development of history from ancient times to the present day,

the evolution of the dragon also shows the changes in the aesthetic ideology of the Chinese nation and the profound significance of the connotation of the national culture. In the comparison and analysis of the bronze sitting dragon with the dragon decorations of all times, with its unique shape form and the national cultural flavor and unique art form beauty, all of these perfectly form the treasure of Chinese traditional art and culture, and play an important role in the history of Chinese art.

Traditional national culture has a long history and a long stream, whether in the past, present or future, the development of totem culture requires us to always maintain a dialectical vision, firmly rejecting the ignorant and backward parts, but also identifying with the positive parts of the inheritance of human civilization. While drawing on the excellent national culture, we should also undertake the mission of passing it on, so that the traditional culture can be passed on continuously, and we can also contribute our strength to the cultural diversity of the Chinese nation.

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