

Analysis of the Culture of "Ancestral Belief" in Chinese Traditional Culture -- Taking the Taiwanese Film Warriors of the Rainbow as An Example

Zhong Cao^{1, a}

¹School of Communication, Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou 730070, China

^axbsdcaozhong@163.com

Abstract

This paper analyses the culture of "ancestral belief" in the Central Plains of Taiwanese film Warriors of the Rainbow, and explores the cultural patterns in Chinese civilization that bear in mind "ancestral belief". The analysis found that in the historical process of China for thousands of years, the "ancestral belief" was engraved into the cultural genes of the Chinese people with its strong belief system, which influenced the construction of the belief system of the Chinese nation and the formation of related customs and ethics. With the imbalance of economic and social development of each ethnic group, the "ancestral belief" has undergone different inheritance and transformation among the various nationalities. The paper finds that regardless of the form of the "ancestral beliefs", the spiritual core and cultural genes of the "ancestral belief" remain unchanged. It presents the following characteristics: strict respect for the male patriarchal authority, strong consciousness of establishing and maintaining sacrifice places, and a strong desire to return to one's ancestral home.

Keywords

Chinese traditional culture, the belief of ancestors, Warriors of the Rainbow.

1. Introduction

Feng Tiance, a Chinese scholar, has studied the origin, classification and essence of belief ontology in Chinese traditional culture. In his research paper On the Origin, Classification and Essence of Belief Ontology, Feng Tiance proposed that belief is a spiritual activity and cultural phenomenon that gradually emerged and separated from the production, labor and social life of human beings after they entered the stage of Homo sapiens, and its origin is the formation of the concept of human soul. Later, in the process of development, belief culture gradually divided into three major systems: primitive belief, religious belief and philosophical belief. In these three systems, primitive belief is a form of belief centered on the concept of soul, with natural worship, ancestor worship and totem worship as its main contents and manifestations. religious belief is centered on the concept of "god", characterized by worship of god, and consists of a series of two parts: heaven and earth, soul and body, good and evil. It is a deepest and lasting forms of belief in the history of human civilization. Philosophical beliefs take people themselves as the core, respect and practice of ideological truth or doctrine as their characteristics, and treat nature and society in accordance with the principles of human nature or science. It is the most important form of human belief after the primitive belief and religious belief, and represents the development direction of human belief.[1]

Another Chinese scholar, You Minghui, defines "ancestral belief" in Chinese traditional culture from anthropological perspective: ancestral belief is a religious habit. It developed from totem worship in the process of the development from matriarchal clan society to patriarchal clan society. Moreover, the worship of the ancestors originated from the primitive people's

remembrance of the deceased of the same clan. The evolution of clan society established patriarchy, and people gradually had the idea that the soul of their father, parents or elders in the clan could bless the members of the clan and their descendants, and began to worship their ancestors.[2]

After the emergence of "ancestral belief", the paradigm of its belief culture has been changed along with the economic and cultural development of different nationalities. Those nationalities that still maintain the primitive mode of production, the paradigm of "ancestral belief" still presents its original form, such as the Sedek people in Taiwan and the Yi people in Liangshan Prefecture in mainland China. But the Han nationality have separated themselves from the primitive mode of production, and the "ancestral belief" has transmuted in their cultures. In the culture of the Han nationality, it is mainly manifested in the transformation of "ancestral belief" from the initial worship of ancestors return to a symbol of ancestral belief: belief system (ancestors), organizational system (blood-related families, regional villages, temples), ceremonial system (family sacrifice, temple sacrifice, tomb sacrifice, public festival, annual sacrifice and life cycle ceremony), symbolic system (ancestral symbol, character symbol, natural object symbol, geographical situation symbol).[3]

Generally, in the Han culture, "ancestral belief" gradually evolved from the original form to patriarchal clan culture, and became a culture form: take patriarchy as the core and make sacrifices to pacify their gods. It involves the hierarchical order, customs and ethics in the development of feudal society for thousands of years.

2. Exploring the "Ancestral Belief " gene of Chinese culture from Warriors of the Rainbow

2.1. Patriarchal Worship Rooted In Primitive Patriarchal Society

The "ancestral belief" has a distinct patriarchal social characteristics, which may originate from the primitive society's respect for tribal leaders, elders and fathers. When patriarchal society came into being, tribal leaders and fathers had absolute authority and were the makers and executors of all legal and moral standards. With the development of social economy, human beings begin to walk out of barbarism, but the genes of leader worship are still stubbornly engraved in the genes of Chinese civilization. In those ethnic minority tribes whose productivity is still primitive, leader worship still exists and evolves into the "ancestral belief ". This "ancestral belief " culture, rooted in patriarchal society, is deeply demonstrated in the film *Warriors of the Rainbow*. The Seediq is a typical patriarchal and patriarchal tribal society. In the film, after Monarudo decided to hunting the enemy, women could only watch their husbands and sons go to their deaths. Although they were reluctant to do so, women had no voice in the Seediq tribe, and they could only listen to men's decisions. After the Japanese army retaliated, in order not to save food, women collectively hanged themselves in the woods.

The patriarchal society's respect for elders and patriarchy is deeply imprinted in the genes of Chinese culture. In the Han nationality culture, hierarchy and patriarchal ideas still prevail for thousands of years. In fact, the whole ancient China was a patriarchal society, and it has resulted in the complex interpersonal relationship with patriarchy as the core. The most direct impression is that many Chinese people deeply appreciate the complexity and accuracy of Chinese kinship terms. In feudal society, fathers were the masters of absolute authority, and they had the power to decide everything in the family unit. There was even the saying that fathers had to die if they wanted their sons to die. The highest form of patriarchal worship is the establishment of monarchy consciousness. In order to establish a stable ruling order and make it more acceptable to the people, the monarchs combined the rule of the state with the rule of the family. This kind of ruling idea refers to the blood relationship criterion of patriarchal society, making the monarchs become the father of all peoples.

In addition, the patriarchal culture based on patriarchal worship is the embodiment of family ethics in social relations, and gradually internalized into a ritual worship of clan rites. Where there is strong patriarchal worship, the clan elders have absolute authority. In many villages of ancient China, the rights of the patriarchal clan often override all laws and morals. People dare not think differently from the clan elders, and can only accept the clan elders's orders.

2.2. Strong Consciousness of Establishing and Maintaining Sacrifice Places

Almost all ethnic groups that produce "ancestral belief" culture have origin myths of ancestors. The origin and living place of ancestors are often sacred places in their minds. This sacred place is where they maintain contact with ancestral spirits.

In the film *Warriors of the Rainbow*, the ancestor legend of the Seediq people is as follows: in a mountain area called "Bnuhun", there is a big tree named "Pusu Qhuni", which is half wood and half stone, and had changed a magic tree with a long time. One day, a man and woman out from the tree, they are married and had many offspring. In the sacred mountain area of "Bnuhun", the Seediq people keep in touch with the original perfect and sacred world of ancestors, break through the limitations of the secular world and touch the eternal reality, and share the transcendence of mountains and their environment into one and become part of the Holy Spirit.[4]

This "ancestral belief" mythology makes ancestors become the dependence to solve all the problems in their lives, which are deeply integrated into the social life and customs of the Seediq people, and become a very stable belief thinking. In the film *Warriors of the Rainbow*, the primitive production and life style of the Seediq trib makes it have no traditional sense of the state and national consciousness. They only see the villages of their own tribe and the exclusive hunting ground. Therefore, the change of sovereignty over Taiwan Island had little effect on them until the Japanese footprints stepped into their forests.[5] This exclusive hunting ground is the ancestral sanctuary of the Seediq people, so when Japanese invade this hunting ground, they will resistance it.

In fact, the Seediq people's guardianship of this hunting ground, which corresponds to the fat and beautiful hunting ground behind the Rainbow Bridge, is consistent with the worship of sacrificial places in Chinese civilization.

In Chinese culture, sacrificial places are mainly divided into two types, one is various temples and monasteries for sacrificing gods, the other is graveyards, family temples and ancestral temples for sacrificing the deceased. The sacrificial places for sacrificing gods is combined with religious beliefs. For this reason, according to the requirements of various religions, different forms and specifications of sacrificial places have been established, such as various temples and pagodas of Buddhism, various Taoist views of Taoism and so on. This kind of sacrificial place is a place which the Chinese hopes to communicate with the gods and seek refuge. It is also stipulated that this place is a sacred place.

The sacrificial places for the deceased reflect the territorial consciousness of the sacrificial places. In the process of the development of Chinese civilization, the patriarchal clan culture produced the belief culture of ancestral tombs and temples. The ancestral temple is a kind of temple for worshiping ancestors. Before 1949, the ancestral temple of China was the most sacred place for a clan, and the important clan affairs should be solved in the ancestral temple.

2.3. A Strong Desire to Return to One's Ancestral Home

In the primitive "ancestral belief", there is a strong desire to return to one's ancestral home. These peoples generally believe that ancestral home is the place where ancestors' souls are located and the holy place where they meet their ancestors. There is harmony and beauty, and it is a paradise that can solve all their spiritual and material difficulties.

In the film *Warriors of the Rainbow*, the core of Seediq belief is to reach the ancestral home through Rainbow Bridge. This return has a fixed and sacred ceremony, and the road is rough and dangerous: young men of the Seediq have to hunting the enemy, and women have to weave war clothes for men. Only in this way can they get the title of Warriors of the Rainbow and the qualification of reaching the ancestral home through Rainbow Bridge. In the film, it is the arrival of the Japanese that terminates the bloody rituals, which makes the Seediq no longer able to pass the Rainbow Bridge. Although from the perspective of our modern civilization, the ceremony is bloody and barbaric, but for the Seediq, the cancellation of this ritual has deprived them of the way to return to their ancestral home, and they can only regain the qualification of pass the Rainbow Bridge by killing the Japanese and sacrificing their ancestors in blood.

The strong desire to return to one's ancestral home and the pursuit of their own identity have left deep traces in Chinese civilization. This kind of trace is reflected in the cultural of the Chinese nation's unwilling to move, and has a profound impact on the national social form and the development of civilization. This culture has also become the beginning of Chinese homesickness culture. In the history of Chinese literature, the literature of homesickness is a very important literary form, a large number of excellent works have been left behind. Up to now, this culture still has strong vitality and appeal. This wave of cultural is a reflection of the spiritual dilemma brought about by capitalist civilization in the West. In a highly technologically developed society, the material pursuit has been enlarged infinitely, and the spiritual world has gradually entered a barren state. Many cultural scholars of China call for the return of culture. In this background, the return of culture is essentially a re-recognition of the "ancestral belief" in the film *Warriors of the Rainbow*. Just like the director of this film, Wei Desheng, after making this film, had a strong idea like tracing the origin of his family. When he found his family tree and saw his name in the list, he was moved to tears, as if at that moment, Wei Desheng had found the answer "Where do you come from, want to go?"

3. Conclusion

The "ancestral belief" culture originated from the patriarchal worship in the primitive patriarchal society in ancient China, and was inherited and developed in thousands of years of Chinese history. However, due to the unbalanced economic and social development of various nationalities, the "ancestral belief" has undergone different inheritance and evolution in different nationalities. The "ancestral belief" culture of the Seediq people in the Taiwanese film *Warriors of the Rainbow* is the primitive form of this culture. In the culture of Han nationality and other nationalities of China, the "ancestral belief" has developed into the worship for patriarchal male authority, strong consciousness of establishing and maintaining sacrifice places, and a strong desire to return to one's ancestral home, and has a far-reaching impact on Chinese traditional culture.

References

- [1] Feng Tiance: On the Origin, Classification and Essence of Belief Ontology, *Dongyue Tribune*, vol. 28 (2007), p.147-153.
- [2] You Minghui: Paradigm and Transcendence: Anthropological Interpretation of the Faith of Zuling in Chinese Cultural Tradition, *Journal of Jishou University (Social Science Edition)*, vol. 36 (2015), p.104-109.
- [3] Peng Zhaorong: Ancestors above: the sublime in the heritage of Chinese traditional culture - and discuss with Wu Hong's monumental, *Ideological Front*, vol. 40 (2014), p.1-6.
- [4] Liu Xiaoshuang: Cultural Interpretation of Ancestor Spirit Belief in Sidek Barre (Ph.D., Xi'an Foreign Studies University of Arts, China 2016), p.28.

- [5] Lu Jianing: Is it the myth of anti-Japanese or the martyr of civilization? - Interpretation of Sidek Barre, Movie Review, vol. 17 (2015), p.7-10.