

Chinese Folk Story of Chang'e Flying to the Moon from the Perspective of "Totem Theory"

Chih-Fan Chang

College of Literature, Zhaoqing University, Zhaoqing 526061, China

Abstract: *Myth is an empirical response to the lives of ancient ancestors. "Chang'e Runs to the Moon" records the story of people flying to the last month, but it cannot explain the relationship between this and the life experience of the ancestors. In the pre Qin literature, the author first deduced that the age of Chang'e's birth and development was in the late Neolithic period, and then used the "totem theory" to demonstrate that Houyi and Chang'e were originally people belonging to different totem tribes of the Sun and the Moon. Due to the tribal warfare, Chang'e's tribe was captured and fled back to the Moon tribe. Through generations of oral transmission, such deeds have transformed into the myth of "Chang'e running to the moon" as we know it today.*

Keywords: *totem theory, Chang'e running to the moon, myth*

1. preface

"Chang'e Runs to the Moon", "Houyi Shoots the Sun", "Nuwa Repairs the Sky", and "Gonggong Touches the Mountain" are among the four ancient Chinese myths. They have been widely spread and praised throughout China for thousands of years. Among them, the story of "Chang'e Running to the Moon" is the most romantic: it tells the sad and beautiful story of a beautiful woman who steals the magic medicine and flies to the Moon Palace in the face of her heroic husband's stealing. There are many works describing Chang'e's flight to the moon in various dynasties, among them, Tang and Li Shangyin's poems:

The candle shadow on the mica screen is deep, and the long river is gradually falling and the morning stars are sinking.

Chang'e should repent of stealing the elixir, the blue sea, the blue sky, and the heart at night.^[14]

2. Chinese Mythology and Totem Theory

2.1 Influenced by Western and Japanese "Mythology"

The word "myth" and its concept were not originally used in China. It belongs to the West and can be traced back to the ancient Greek era in the fifth and sixth centuries BC. Ancient Greece is an important birthplace of civilization in Europe, with a well-developed and brilliant literary development, and "myth" is an important literary connotation of ancient Greece. The English word "myth" originates from the ancient Greek words "mythos" and "mythologia", and it is implicitly pointed out that its "original meaning is confused with fables of legendary stories."^[10]It can be seen that the original meaning of mythology is a mixture of folklore, religious beliefs, and fables. It is based on the story of the creation of ancient Greece and the gods, but traditional Chinese literature does not have this concept. Guan Yongzhong further quoted ancient Greek content from the perspective of a linguist and analyzed the word "mythos", saying:

Mythos, Its surface meaning refers to language, characters, and stories; He corresponds to the word Meudh in the Indo-European language family, which means "to reflect, to think, to think"; That is, some languages and characters contain profound meanings that deserve our reflection in order to appreciate the ultimate meaning.^[12]

According to Guan's linguistic interpretation, in addition to the content of the story itself, Western mythological concepts also need to have the ability to think positively and reflect, further echoing the emotions of human nature. It is based on the fact that all gods in Greek mythology have diverse aspects

of human nature such as love, hatred, and hatred. This is also a concept that is not available in Chinese mythology, and it is not appropriate to directly use Western "mythological" theories to demonstrate Chinese mythology.

2.2 Definition of Chinese mythology

Due to the differences between Eastern and Western cultures and national conditions, the original meaning of Western mythology is not applicable to Chinese literature itself, while Japanese mythology has its political purpose, which is also inappropriate. Therefore, after its concept of myth was introduced into China, many scholars specialized in studying the theory of "mythology", absorbing its positive meaning and searching for materials in Chinese literature, finally transforming it into the connotation of Chinese literature. Scholars have redefined the Chinese myth of belonging, and Lu Xun pointed out:

In the early days of the past, when people saw everything in heaven and earth, their variations were not constant, and their various phenomena were based on human power, they created their own theories to explain them; Whatever is explained is now called a myth.^[11]

Qianmingzi advocates:

Myth is the visualization of the objective world through fantasy, and is the product of primitive collective belief, sacred and credible. Therefore, myth is also considered as an unconscious narrative art of primitive people.^[15]

The definitions of Chinese mythology by the various schools mentioned above all share a common argument, that is, they are all explained and recorded by the ancestors with limited knowledge and life experience at that time. This is also the common definition of Chinese mythology today. In addition to the above summary, in his book "Research on Chinese Myth and Quasi Myth", Fu Shixi Ren proposed to define myth in the way of deletion: Because the gods in Chinese mythology are ethereal and bizarre, even the same god can be difficult to name due to time, place, and image changes. It is better for the most specific person to reflect on the characteristics of the gods in reverse order to comprehensively summarize the connotation of the gods in Chinese mythology.

3. The Mythical Thinking of Chang'e Flying to the Moon

The story of "Chang'e Flying to the Moon" has been circulating in China for thousands of years, but as time evolves, the more stories that later generations will portray for her, the more beautiful and legendary Chang'e has become.

3.1 Documentary Records of Chang'e Flying to the Moon

The earliest documented record of "Chang'e Flying to the Moon" can be traced back to the book "Returning to Tibet" in the early Warring States period. Although the book was once lost during its circulation, the quotations from the book "Returned to Tibet" can still be seen in "Wen Xin Diao Long" and "Wen Xuan", and the story of Chang'e running to the moon in "Returned to Tibet" has thus been preserved. According to "Wen Xin Diao Long":

According to the Sutra of "Returning to Tibet", the great Ming Dynasty was full of twists and turns, which was called the 10th day of Yi's death, The Goddess Chang'e fly to the moon.^[16]

In the "Selected Works", Xie Xiyi's "Ode on Sacrificing the Moon" records the ancient events of sacrificing the moon. Li Shan cites the "Return to Tibet" record in his annotation:

In the past, Chang'e rushed to the moon with the medicine of immortality.^[17]

Chang E is Chang E.⁽¹⁾In addition, in the "Selected Works" of Wang Seng Da's "Sacrifice to Yan Guanglu", Li Shanzhu also cited the "Return of the Book of Changes" as saying:

(1) "Chang'e" and "Chang'e" refer to Chang'e. In other books, Chang'e refers to "Heng'e", but because the name of Emperor Wen of the Han Dynasty was taboo, "Heng" was changed to "Chang'e". The two characters "Heng" and "Chang'e" have similar meanings and are both steam parts, which can naturally be used interchangeably. Heng'e is undoubtedly Chang'e. "

3.2 *The Story of Chang'e Flying to the Moon Spreads*

The spread of the story of Chang'e running to the moon among the people is closely related to the idea of immortality. Zhao Hong pointed out that:

The seemingly pure myth is actually a "fairy tale" myth, and the main basis is that it contains the idea of immortality and immortality. The emergence of the idea of immortality in ancient China was not later than the turn of the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period.^[18]

During the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, various schools of thought contended, among which the theory of Yin and Yang combined with the theory of divination and divination to talk about immortality, which was the early stage of the development of immortal thought. In the late Warring States period, the idea of immortality flourished. According to historical records, King Wei of Qi, King Xuan, and King Yan Zhao had large-scale activities to seek immortality, and such activities reached their peak after Emperor Qin Shihuang ruled the country⁽²⁾. In the later period of Qin Shihuang's unification of China, he hoped to govern the country forever and seek immortality. He sent people everywhere to search for immortal mountains, immortals, and elixirs. Among them, Xu Fu, a person from the Qi Dynasty, was most famous for sending thousands of children, boys, and girls to the sea to search for divine mountains and immortals.⁽³⁾ Therefore, in the Qin and Han dynasties, Chang'e ran to the moon mixed with the idea of immortality, which was explained in the "Huainanzi Ranming Xun" by Gao Yin:

"Yi E, Yi's wife.". Yi asked the Immortal Medicine to be given to the Queen Mother of the West. Before she could take it, she stole it, gained immortality, and rushed into the middle of the month, becoming the essence of the moon.^[19]

Gao Yin's note regards Chang'e as having the ability to travel to the moon and transform into moon essence after obtaining the immortal medicine. The idea of immortality in the Han Dynasty was infused into mythology with the myth of "Chang'e running to the moon", which, through Gao Yin's annotation, became a fairy tale in the Han Dynasty. This is also one of the factors that are often inseparable from fairy tales and ghost tales in today's fairy tales.

The romantic story of Chang'e running to the moon has thus been combined with the Mid-Autumn Festival, contributing to the widespread belief of Chang'e among the people. With the passage of time, festivals, led by various festive activities such as celebrations and local customs, gradually triggered people's belief and worship of Chang'e, and eventually became an indispensable and important role in the Mid-Autumn Festival celebrations.

4. Textual Research on the Era of Chang'e Flying to the Moon

Mythical stories are handed down from ear to ear, and it is difficult to verify the era in which they occurred. Although it is difficult to verify the occurrence of the myth of "Chang'e running to the moon" from historical data or unearthed cultural relics. However, the close relationship between Chang'e and Houyi can be confirmed by the historical records of the pre Qin period. However, there are indeed records of Hou Yi in history, which are based on the textual research of his era. The author believes that it can be inferred from the era when Chang'e ran to the moon. There are two records of "Yi" in ancient books:

One is Xu Shen's "Shuowen". "Shuowen" is a calligraphy book of the Han Dynasty, in which two small seal characters are mentioned; 「羽」 and 「羿」. Shuowen 「羽」 Interpreted as: "The feather opens

(2) According to "Records of the Historian: The Book of Fengchan": "Ziwei, Xuan, and Yanzhao sent people into the sea to seek Penglai, Abbot, and Yingzhou. These three divine mountains were passed down in the Bohai Sea, not far from the people. If the disease occurred, the ship's wind led them away. If there was a limit, all the immortals and the immortal medicine were there. Their objects were white, and their gold and silver were palace palaces. Before they arrived, they looked like clouds. When they arrived, the three divine mountains turned to live under the water. When they approached, the wind and the rut led them away, and ultimately there was no cloud. The world leader was not content."

(3) According to the "Records of the Historian: The Annals of the First Emperor of Qin", "Xu Shi and others of the Qi Dynasty wrote a letter saying that there are three sacred mountains in the sea, named Penglai, Abbot, and Yingzhou, where immortals reside. Please obtain fasting and seek it with boys and girls. Therefore, Xu Shi sent thousands of boys and girls to the sea to seek immortals..."

the wind. It is also the ancient princes. One is called the archer. From the feather opens the voice." [16]
 弓 箭 The regular script is interpreted as: "Emperor Ku shot at the officials, and Xia Shaokang extinguished them. The sound was heard from the bow." [17] From the interpretation of "Shuowen", it can be seen that this "Yi" was the official shot by Emperor Ku.

The second is contained in "Huainanzi. This Sutra":

When Yao was captured, the ten days rose at the same time... Yao ordered Yi to chisel his teeth in the field of Chou Hua, kill nine infants on the fierce water, capture the strong wind in the Qingqiu River, shoot up for ten days, and kill the snake down, cut the snake in the Dongting, and capture the Siegesesia in the mulberry forest. All the people rejoice, and consider Yao the Son of Heaven. [20]

5. Explanation of Chang'e's Flight to the Moon from the Perspective of "Totem Theory"

Regarding the relationship between "Chang'e running to the moon" and Yi, Fu Shixi Ren explained it by "totem theory":

If viewed from the perspective of totem, Chang'e or the clan of the moon totem was occupied by Yi, the bird totem. Chang'e took advantage of her unpreparedness and stole the immortal medicine, fleeing to the clan of her totem.

The author further explains the relationship between totems and tribes in China

5.1 Prehistoric tribal totems

Although the term "totem" is not used in ancient Chinese books, the concept of totem and totem worship has existed since ancient times. "The Year of Secretary Zhu" records the grand occasion of Yu Shun's accession to the throne:

That is, the emperor's throne, where the castellas are born on the terraces, and the phoenix emperor nests in the courtyard. He strikes the stones and touches them, singing the song of Jiushao, and the beasts lead the dance. The scenery stars come out of the room, and the ground rides on the yellow horse. [25]

Yu Shun accepted the abdication of Tang Yao and succeeded him to the throne. At that time, the whole country was jubilant, and various noisy celebrations and ceremonies made the time extremely lively. Of course, "Hundred Beasts Leading the Dance" does not mean that real beasts come to congratulate Yu Shun, but rather that people dress up as beasts to dance and celebrate. This dance imitates the movements of various animals and symbolizes the harmonious and unified taste of humans and animals, with totemic implications, which evolved into a religious ritual.

In addition to ancient legends, historical records can also prove the credibility of Chinese totem culture. According to the "Historical Records of the Five Emperors", "The Yellow Emperor was the son of Shaodian, surnamed Gongsun, and named Xuanyuan." [21], "So the Yellow Emperor has a bear." Qiao Zhou is quoted as saying in the collection of "Records of the Historian": "Yellow Emperor, there is Xiong Guojun, the son of Shaodian." Huang Fumi was quoted as saying, "There are bears in Xinzheng, Henan today." Xu Guang said, "The number has a bear." Ban Gu's "White Tiger Tongyi Chapter" also said, "The Yellow Emperor has a world under his name, and he calls it a bear." [22] It can be seen that the totem of the Yellow Emperor tribe should be called "bear totem.". In the tribal era, totems were an important symbol to distinguish between the enemy and ourselves. "Liezi" also records that "Yellow Emperor and Yan Emperor fought in the field of Banquan, with handsome bears, bats, wolves, leopards, and tigers as their forebodies, and sculptures, dragons, eagles, and kites as their flags." [23] In the battle between the Yellow Emperor and the Yan Emperor, it is certainly impossible for the commander to lead the troops of bears, bats, wolves, leopards, and tigers as the forerunners to become a true division of all beasts.

The war between the Yellow Emperor and the Yan Emperor led by the Yellow Emperor, who took bears as their totem, led the armies of various totem tribes to attack the Yan Emperor together. Within the Yellow Emperor clan group, there are many clans with different totems, and among these clans, the Xiong totem clan occupies the primary position. [24]

5.2 *Chang'e and the Moon Totem Tribe*

The moon is an eternal existence in the universe, but it is a constantly changing and circulating existence. Through simple logical calculations, the ancestors equated the moon's ups and downs with the joys and sorrows of human beings, enabling the moon god to emerge from the primitive blood clan and become the god of human reunion. Wang Xiaolian Yun:

The main reason for associating the moon with women is that the moonlight is gentle. In many national myths, the moon god is usually a gentle woman, while the sun is usually a proud teenager or a fierce warrior. The gentle moon is either said to be the wife or sister of the sun, or to be a girl who runs away from her lover, the sun. The fact that ancient Chinese people associate the moon with women can also be understood from the perspective of the names "Moon Mother" in Chinese mythology, such as Changxi, Nuhe, Heng'e, and Chang'e.^[4]

Zhao Guohua believes that in addition to the frog and the moon, both symbolize female reproduction. In ancient times, women had the mission of inheriting their lineage and continuing their race, so the frog and the moon became one. In addition, He Xingliang also proposed many signs in "China's Natural Gods and Natural Worship", which can show that many tribal peoples in ancient China used frogs or toads as totemic symbols, and therefore, through the concept of totemic worship, regarded their totemic ancestors as gods from the moon.^[5] It is the woman named Chang'e who should have come to use the toad as a tribal totem. This tribe attaches importance to female reproduction worship, so it is also a branch of the tribe that worships the moon totem.

6. Conclusion

"Totem theory" is one of the many research theories in mythology, although it does have good results in explaining mythology in many aspects. The mythical story is based on something, not entirely virtual. It is demonstrated by the myth of "Chang'e running to the moon". Since humans cannot fly, how can there be a story of flying to the moon? But is it the life experience of our ancestors? Indeed, many related issues discussed in the "totem theory" can be readily resolved. However, some scholars still question it and believe that whether the ancient Chinese ethnic tribes in China really practiced totem worship customs.

Combining the field of socio-cultural studies does indeed open up another avenue of research for mythology. The myth of "Chang'e running to the moon" has been praised for generations through the ages, but today there are many achievements in the study of the myth of "Chang'e running to the moon". Various interpretations are attempting to restore the truth of the Chang'e myth. Either way of explanation adds to the brilliance of this myth. From "Hou Yi Shoots the Sun" to "Chang E Runs to the Moon", and from "Jade Rabbit Pestles Medicine" to "Wu Gang Attacks Gui", a romantic fairy tale will be forever sung down by people.

References

- [1] "Totem Worship," written by A. E. Haitong and translated by He Xingliang. Guangxi: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2004.
- [2] Yu Naichang and Xia Min, "Religion and Aesthetic Ecstasy of the Early People," Qinghai: Qinghai People's Publishing House, 1994.
- [3] Wang Dayou, "Illustrated Chinese Totem", Beijing: People's Fine Arts Publishing House, 1998.
- [4] Wang Xiaolian, "Collection of National Mythology of Lingyun Guanxue" (Beijing: Xueyuan Publishing House, 2002), page 200.
- [5] He Xingliang, "Chinese Natural Gods and Natural Worship" (Shanghai: Sanlian Bookstore, 1992), pp. 188-189.
- [6] "Chinese Totem Culture," by He Xingyu. Beijing: China Social Science Press, 1992.
- [7] Bai C S . On Translation Strategy of Mongolian Culture-Specific Words in the English Version of Wolf Totem from the Perspective of Cultural Translation Theory[J]. Journal of Inner Mongolia University for Nationalities(Social Sciences), 2015.
- [8] Guan Y , Zhang B H . Analysis of the English Version of Wolf Totem from the Perspective of Toury's Translation Theory[J]. Journal of Changchun Normal University, 2016.
- [9] Zhao Guohua. On the Culture of Reproductive Worship. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1991.

- [10] "Chinese Ancient Myths and Legends," written by Qian Mingzi (Tianjin: Tianjin Education Press, 1991), page 1.
- [11] Lu Xun, "A Brief History of Chinese Fiction" (Shanghai: Shanghai Culture Publishing House, 2005), page 12.
- [12] Webb D. *the current state of forensics: a newbies perspective*[J]. *Journal of Forensic Research*, 2018.
- [13] Pete, Coppolillo, and, et al. *Selection criteria for suites of landscape species as a basis for site-based conservation - ScienceDirect*[J]. *Biological Conservation*, 2004, 115(3):419-430.
- [14] "Chang'e" by Li Shangyin is included in "The Complete Works of the Four Corpus of Wenyuange" (Hong Kong: Dizhi Culture Publishing Company, 1995), Collection/Other Collections/Han to Five Dynasties/Li Yishan's Poetry Collection/Volume, page 21.
- [15] "Ancient Chinese Myths and Legends," by Qian Mingzi, page 2.
- [16] Written by Liu Xie (Southern Dynasty), "Wen Xin Diao Long" is included in the collection of "Wen Yuan Ge Si Ku Quan Shu Lianlian Online Edition"/Poetry Review Category/Wen Xin Diao Long/Volume 4, page 6.
- [17] Written by Xu Shen (Han Dynasty): "Shuowen" is included in the "Wenyuange Four Library Complete Books Intranet Edition", Economic Department/Primary School Category/Category of Word Books/Shuowen Jiezi/Volume 12, page 23.
- [18] Zhao Hong: "Chang'e Flying to the Moon and Taoist Moon Immortals." *Chinese Religion*, July 2009, p. 53.
- [19] (Han) Liu Anzhuan (Han) Gao Yinzhu: "Huainanzi" is included in the sub section of "The Complete Works of the Four Corpus of Wenyuan Pavilion" (Intranet Edition)/Miscellaneous Classics/Category of Miscellaneous Studies/Huainan Honglie Jie/Volume 6, page 14.
- [20] (Han Dynasty) Liu An wrote: "Huainan Zi" is included in the sub section of "The Complete Works of the Four Libraries of the Wen Yuan Pavilion" (Internal Online Edition)/Miscellaneous Category/Category of Miscellaneous Studies/Huainan Honglie Interpretation/Volume VIII, page 4.
- [21] Written by Sima Qian (Han Dynasty): "Records of the Historian" is included in the History Department/Official History Category/Records of the Historian/Volume I of "The Complete Works of the Four Libraries of the Wen Yuan Pavilion", page 2-3.
- [22] Guillemette D, guillemette.david@uqam.ca, Information V F A, et al. *The theory of objectification: a Vygotskian perspective on knowing and becoming in mathematics teaching and learning*.
- [23] (Spring and Autumn Period) Compiled by Lie Yukou: "Liezi" is included in the "Internal Online Edition of the Complete Works of the Four Libraries of the Wenyuan Pavilion" sub section/Taoism/Liezi/Volume 2, page 22.
- [24] Yang Yachang, "Preliminary Analysis and Archaeological Observation of the Legends of the Yan Emperor and the Yellow Emperor." *Prehistoric Studies*, 1987, Issue 4.
- [25] Liu G Z, Qing-Liu L I, Humanities S O , et al. *Exploring the Influence of Wolf Totem on American Readers from the Perspective of Big Data*[J]. *Journal of Xiangtan University(Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 2019.