

A Comparative Study of Tibetan and English Auspicious Culture: Based on "The King Gesar" and "Homer's Epic"

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ABSTRACT

Auspicious culture refers to the collection of cultural representations related to auspicious concepts and auspicious consciousness. There are similar cultural concepts in the auspicious culture of ancient Tibetan cultural system and the ancient Greek cultural system, such as auspicious objects, languages, behaviors, and numbers. This can be seen in the "King Gesar" and "Homer's Epic". Due to factors such as thinking mode, personality and national psychology, the auspicious culture presents different cultural representations in the two cultural systems.

Keywords: *auspicious concept, auspicious representation, mutual understanding, similarities and differences*

I. INTRODUCTION

As an important carrier of culture, literature and culture complement each other. Literature involves human feelings and hearts, with less utilitarian intentions. Among different cultures, there are more common levels, in which it is easily to communicate and understand with each other [1]¹⁸. As the great works of Tibetan and Greek folk literature, "King Gesar" and "Homer's Epic" are encyclopedias about the life forms, religious beliefs, customs and habits of ancient Tibetans and Greece, containing rich auspicious culture. In the context of the world cultural system, it is of positive significance to dialectically explore the auspicious concepts and cultural representations contained in the two epics in enriching the cultural comparative studies on the two epics.

II. A COMPARISON OF TIBETAN AUSPICIOUS CONCEPT BETWEEN ENGLISH AUSPICIOUS CONCEPT — BASED ON "KING GESAR" AND "HOMER'S EPIC"

The explanation of "祥" in *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* is "to be good", meaning good words and auspiciousness [2]¹²³. "吉" means "blessing" [2]⁶. Auspiciousness is a symbol of beauty. Auspiciousness, blessing and disaster are the earliest values of human beings [3]⁵⁸¹, expressing the yearning and pursuit of a better life in the practical process of experiencing nature. This kind of longing and the desire to pursue a better life are reflected in these two epics. In "King Gesar", there are many records on folk activities of ancient Tibetan nationality, such as praying, incense, divination and so on. Similarly, there are many records in "Homer's Epic" that ancient Greeks tried to seek protection by praying to gods and offering sacrifices. The auspicious concept refers to psychological consolation and spiritual power of praying for good luck and seeking auspiciousness by the early ancient Tibetan and ancient Greek. Even now, people still have the psychology of seeking auspiciousness. According to this fact, it is found that it is a universal pursuit of human society seeking good fortune and avoiding misfortune regardless of time and region.

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III. THE COMPARISON OF TIBETAN AND ENGLISH AUSPICIOUS CULTURAL REPRESENTATION — BASED ON THE "KING GESAR" AND "HOMER'S EPIC"

Auspicious culture is the reflection of human beings yearning for and pursuing the auspiciousness [5]⁸¹. It is a collection of cultural concrete images about auspicious concepts and auspicious consciousness attached to it. To investigate the traditional auspicious culture of a nation is an effective way to understand its psychology, character, purport and habit [6]¹⁵⁶. As an important part of national traditional culture, auspicious culture has different expression forms in different nationalities and cultures [6]¹⁵⁷. Xu Hualong thinks that auspicious culture can be roughly divided into object auspiciousness, behavioral auspiciousness, linguistic auspiciousness, literal auspiciousness and numeral auspiciousness, basically covering the important aspects of auspicious culture and reflecting the general appearance of auspicious culture [7]⁶⁷. Shen Lihua, a scholar, divides auspicious culture into four aspects: linguistic auspiciousness, numeral auspiciousness, object auspiciousness and behavioral auspiciousness [5]⁸¹. In this paper, the author mainly discusses the second point of view.

A. Object auspiciousness

Object auspiciousness refers to the auspiciousness contained or shown by a certain kind of objects [5]⁸¹. There are such auspicious objects in "King Gesar" and "Homer's Epic". These objects used to express auspiciousness generally include characters, animals, plants, nature, utensils, etc. [3]⁵⁸³

Object auspiciousness is frequently reflected in "King Gesar". Specifically, Guanyin Bodhisattva, Amitabha Buddha, Padmasambhava and five Buddhas [8]²⁻⁴ are auspicious figures; the appearance of Phoenix, dragon, griffin, tiger, yak [8]¹⁵⁻³⁸ represents auspicious omen; *Saussurea involucrata* and lotus [8]⁷ belong to auspicious plants; sun, Sumeru Mountain, snow mountain, mountains [8]⁷⁻⁴⁴ belong to natural category; In the records on King Gesar's birth and abhiseca, there are musical instruments such as vajry pestle, white silver bell [8]¹², and eight auspicious treasures of LingGa Conference [8]²³, which belong to the category of auspicious utensils.

There are also records on object auspiciousness in "Homer's Epic". In terms of auspicious figures, when people have difficulties and dangers, they will always pray to the Twelve Gods on Olympus, and these gods will appear in time to give inspiration to those who pray. In terms of auspicious animals, the sacrifices used are mostly cattle and sheep. In the first volume, Cruces, the

priest, asked Agamemnon for his daughter, and then turned to pray to Apollo: "if I burn the leg wrapped in grease, the leg bones of a bull or a goat, and you feel happy, please honor my prayer [9]³." According to this, it is found that Cruces had offered sacrifices to Apollo with oxen or sheep. In the second volume, the Athenian sons offered sacrifices to Apollo with bulls and rams, looking forward to obtain the blessing [9]⁵¹. When Agamemnon planned to offer gifts to Achilles, he mentioned that the people of Prologis were rich in cattle and sheep, and they would offer cattle and sheep to Achilles [9]²³⁰. There are many kinds of plants in "Homer's Epic", such as olive, clover, pine, grape and so on. Among them, barley is an auspicious plant. Barley had been used as a sacrifice many times in sacrifice. According to the first volume of "Iliad": "they washed their hands and picked up the barley for sacrifice [9]²⁰. In the second volume, "they stand around the bull and took the barley for the sacrifice." According to the records of volume 12, "there was pasta made from sacred barley [9]³⁰⁷." These records show that barley, as a sacrifice, is a sign of holiness and auspiciousness, and barley flour represents the earth and is the first substance in human diet [10]. In "Homer's Epic", there are many worship of natural forces (such as storm, fire, etc.) and utensils (such as scepter, Aegis, war shield, etc.), but there is no evidence that they are auspicious objects.

B. Behavioral auspiciousness

Behavioral auspiciousness means that people use the behaviors to show the auspiciousness, which can be divided into two types: behaviors praying for auspiciousness and harboring auspiciousness [7]⁶⁸.

In the first chapter of "King Gesar", it is mentioned that "Padmasambhava on the Bairi Mountain of Jiaya Sanduo heard the song of God's son and knew that it was time for him to take the abhiseca [11]¹¹." "Abhiseca" is a sacred ceremony for Buddhists to pass on the Dharma. After five Buddhists made the the abhiseca for Tuibagawa, he had incomparable merits and virtues, and then went to the world to help all living beings. In the second chapter of "King Gesar", mahasiddhas Jieweilunzhu made a divination of Rongchachagen and said: "we must quickly call up the six tribes of the region to hold a meeting, and then sacrifice to the God of War at Magalilatan, practice Dharma and pray for blessings, and hold a grand celebration ceremony [11]²³. And this is a celebration held to welcome the great heroes in this region." In Chapter 10 of "King Gesar", "people burned cypress and 'mulberry' in thirteen sacred rooms on Gureshi Mountain for worshipping gods. They prostrated themselves on the ground and chanted words in their mouths, so as to pray to God and Dharma protector for Gesar

competition and sing praises for the God of War [8]¹¹²." In addition, according to "King Gesar", people often made divination to ask for the blessing when they dreamed, went on an expedition, or held a celebration. For example, "when Jieweilunzhu woke up, he felt strange in his heart and made a divination to ask about the blessing. Auspicious signs appeared in Lingdi [8]¹¹²." The above-mentioned activities, such as abhiseca, praying, burning mulberry and making divination, are not only the acts of praying for the blessing, but also are auspicious behaviors. Praying for auspiciousness and the behavior containing auspiciousness are embodied in these religious and folk activities.

According to the "Records of the Iliad", after welcoming his daughter back, Cruces organized the sacred offerings to the gods, raised his hands and prayed with a loud voice: "listen to me, the holy guardian of Kruse and Gera, please protect Tenedos with your silver bow [9]²⁰." In "Homer's Epic", there are many scenes such as offering sacrifices to gods and praying for protection. There are also many divination scenes in "Homer's Epic", and there are special diviners to interpret the prophesy for the parties. For example, in order to reverse the situation where Achilles was at a disadvantage in the war due to the unprovoked plague, he asked Calchas, the son of Settor, who informed the past and the future, to use the divination to explain Apollo's anger. The prophet said the cause of Apollo's plague, namely, Acamennon insulted the priest of the gods, needed to return the priest's daughter and give Kruse a generous and sacred sacrifice to calm Apollo's anger [9]⁴⁻⁵. Similarly, the above activities not only belong to auspicious behaviors, but also are the behaviors containing auspicious meanings.

C. Linguistic auspiciousness

Linguistic auspiciousness refers to the congratulatory vocabulary in a specific scene [7]⁶⁸.

In "King Gesar", the six character mantra "唵嘛呢叭咪吽"(om mani padme hum), as an auspicious language, appears frequently. It contains all the great wisdom, compassion and power of Buddhism. It is the most respected syntactic mantra in Tibetan Buddhism. In addition to Buddhist auspicious words, there are also many eulogies in "King Gesar". In the fifth chapter, when Jiachaxiega came to ask for help from Jue Ru, he offered hada and sang, "noble Ajijuejeji, Jue Ru who will live a hundred years [8]¹⁵¹!" This was Jiachaxiega's real intention of appealing to Jue Ru by saying congratulatory words, which was also a kind of blessing from the heart.

In the "Iliad", there are such words, such as "distinguished and excellent [9]⁶", "God-like [9]⁶",

"beautiful cheek [9]⁷", "gray eye [9]¹⁰", "white arm [9]¹⁰", "resourceful [9]¹⁵" and "beautiful [9]⁵³", which are used to describe the gods or heroes in the epic and express a kind of respect. As Audrey Hepburn said, the charm of mouth is to say friendly words, and friendly and praiseworthy words can increase the peace.

D. Numerical auspiciousness

Numbers not only indicate the quantity, but also imply good luck [7]⁶⁸.

There are many auspicious numbers in Tibetan culture. In particular, odd numbers are regarded as auspicious numbers, and "three", "nine" and "thirteen" are especially advocated in odd numbers. This view can be strongly supported in "King Gesar". In the second chapter, the old manager had a strange dream. He dreamed that a guru with a lotus crown said to him: "there will be auspicious signs in Lingdi. It is required to hold a meeting to gather people on the 13th. There are thirteen memorial houses, thirteen kinds of auspicious flags, thirteen ways of calling for blessing, thirteen kinds of celebration dance, thirteen songs and thirteen vegetarians [8]¹⁵." All these "thirteen" represent the holiness and auspiciousness. In addition, in the 31th chapter, the heroine Adanamu led her troops to attack the Aza camp and sang: "it is to use the nine-twined sharp arrows, nine kinds of birds and nine kinds of refined iron [8]³⁶⁶", in which the heroine expressed the sharpness of their weapons through several librettos with "nine" as well as praying for victory over the enemy. In addition, the number "three" is often linked with beautiful and auspicious things. In the second chapter, the old manager dedicated three kinds of high-quality hada to the three gurus, and gave them three pieces of yellow golden silk, and entertained the three gurus with three kinds of sweet food, three kinds of tender meat of livestock and three kinds of pastry [8]²³.

The frequency of numbers in "Homer's Epic" is far less than those in "King Gesar". Chen Zhongmei, a scholar, concluded that "twelve" and "nine" are the numbers that appear more frequently in "Homer's Epic" [9]¹⁶³. First of all, the number "twelve" is recorded as follows: Zeus and the gods of Danleng took part in the banquet of Ethiopians and returned on the twelfth day [9]¹⁹; Ajax brought 12 sea ships, was arranged beside the Athenian formation [9]⁵¹; Helenus sent Hector home and asked Muqie to offer twelve heifers to Athena [9]¹⁵⁶; the total number of sleeping rooms for Priam's daughters was 12 [9]¹⁶³; and Olympus had twelve gods and so on. Secondly, the number "nine" also appeared many times, such as, having banquets in nine days, killing nine fat cattle [9]¹⁶⁰, passing nine years that was controlled by Zeus [9]³³, etc. In addition to "twelve" and "nine", "three" also appeared many times. For example,

Eurualos, the God-like man, ranked third [9]⁵¹; Hera told Zeus that she had three most beloved cities under the sky [9]⁹⁰; for the Achaians, when the night came, they prayed for sweetness three times [9]²¹⁹. These figures are not only exponential, but also have special meanings. For example, "twelve", "nine" and "three" are all related to sacrifice. It can be inferred that they have auspicious meanings.

Through the analysis of the two epics, "King Gesar" and "Homer's Epic", it is found that the auspicious culture is contained in the daily life and social activities of ancient Tibetan and ancient Greek nations. First of all, since human beings have roughly the same life forms and related forms [1]²⁰, ancient Tibetan and ancient Greek nationalities have the concept of auspiciousness, but the former is explicit, while the latter tends to be implicit. Secondly, in the concrete aspect of auspicious culture, both ancient Tibetans and ancient Greece had auspicious objects, behaviors, languages and numbers. However, due to the different cultural systems of ancient Tibetan and ancient Greek nationalities, according to different life, way of thinking, national character and other reasons, there are differences between these two auspicious cultural images. The auspicious concept of ancient Tibetan is explicit, so the auspicious elements are revealed everywhere in life, and are transmitted through various auspicious cultural images. Accordingly, the concept of auspiciousness of the ancient Greek nation is implicit, so it is only reflected through some cultural images.

IV. CONCLUSION

With the development of cultural globalization, multi-cultural coexistence is an inevitable trend, and heterogeneous cultures and cultural concepts need mutual understanding. Tibetan culture is an important part of Chinese traditional culture. It also needs to seek new development and complete its own modernization in a broader cultural context. As the source of western culture, Greek culture also needs to look for the "other" in the face of cultural crisis, and re-examine itself in contrast to find new vitality. The mutual understanding of auspicious culture in "King Gesar" and "Homer's Epic" positively corresponds to the concept of the community of human destiny. The mutual understanding of ancient Tibetan and ancient Greek auspicious cultures improves mutual understanding and reflection between the two heterogeneous cultures, promotes the exploration and pursuit of the common values of human, such as "truth, goodness and beauty", and helps to better maintain cultural diversity and cultural ecological balance.

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