

The Fusion of Buddhist Naga Culture Based on Goddesses in China and Japan

Lihua Huang

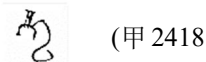
UCDavis, California, 95616, United State

Abstract: Based on the globalization of nowadays, there are many cultures fusion together. However, the Naga culture in different countries has a distinguished meaning from the different regions. Then there is a debate that some nations believe this is their culture. For example, the Chinese always called themselves the descendants of the dragon, and the Japanese think it may be the origin of their culture based on their history book Records of Ancient Matters. Despite this, other places like Thailand and Malaysia also liked the Naga much in their cultures. So what's the actual Buddhism Naga culture belong to? Is the Buddhism Naga culture, with the fusion of their local religions and becoming a new belief system in those regions? This research paper will focus on the Buddhism Naga culture in China and Japan to discuss the Naga culture with the fusion of their local religions or thoughts based on goddesses.

Keywords: Chinese religion, Chinese Thinking, Buddhism, Naga Culture, China, Japan.

1. Introduction

The Buddhism Naga culture should be traced to Buddha's seven days under the Bodhi tree. On day six, Naga King helps Shakyamuni avoid rain by using his vast body. Then the connection between Buddhist Naga culture may be shown as the dragon figure in China. The evidence of similarity between the Chinese Dragon and Buddhist Naga is based on the oracle bones from prehistoric China during the Shang dynasty. Oxen bones were one of the ritual practices in the Shang Dynasty to give an idea of the future people. Then later, humans realized there were some pictures in those bones, the earliest developed Chinese character: oracle bones. The symbols were carved on the oxen bones:



合 22507 子組, Zdic). Character Dragon in those oracle bones showed the record of this supernatural creature appearing in Chinese history which seems like a dragon and snake by its drawing record. The reason for the oracle bones character of the Dragon is one of the convincing evidence of dragons appearing based on their writing way: drawing the object. As we can see in this small picture in Zdic, it seems like a head in the beginning, with two feet in the middle and one long tail at the end. Then, after Buddhism spread into China, the dragon culture may become the new religious system with the fusion of Naga culture later.

2. The origin Chinese Naga figure in China based on Myth

Despite this Chinese character record, Cohen's journal article stated that Naga is the local deity and using the statement initially from Conze, who admits that "Buddhist theory has combined with acceptance of the magical and mythological (p.474 and 362, Nāga, Yakṣiṇī, Buddha: Local Deities and Local Buddhism at Ajanta, Richard S. Cohen)." Based on this statement, the earliest Chinese tale of similar Naga figures is about the creator of humans: Nuwa and her consort Fuxi who's half human and half snake. In Junwu Tian's Journal Article, he stated that those are "animal nature kept in human beings (Nie Zheng Zhao and the Genesis of

Chinese Ethical Literary Criticism, Junwu Tian)." This statement may be evidence of the new Chan Buddhism: figure Long Nu as the cultural and religious fusion in China later.

3. Dragon Lady as Naga figure related form

The Naga figure in China, through spreading Buddhism with the original legend of the Naga King in India, showed in Chinese Buddhism with the Avalokiteshvara's attendant figure. The tale of Avalokiteshvara with the Naga King's daughter Dragon Lady is the Chinese version's tale of showing respect for the Naga culture. We talked about the first tale of Longnu in the Complete Tale of Avalokiteshvara and the Southern Seas: Sudhana, who's Longnu's brother, transformed into a fish to go swimming and caught by a fisherman. After a few hours, the villagers realized this fish was still alive on the ground and believed he had eternal power. Longnu tried to save her brother, but villagers laughed at her. Ultimately, Guan Yin said that life should belong to the one who wants to keep him instead of the one who wants to kill it. Then, villagers realized they were at fault and ran away.

4. Dragon Lady's related figure of Guan Yin

Guan Yin is the Chinese version's goddess of mercy: Guan Yin is based on the Princess Miao Shan figure we discussed in class. The Guan Yin appears in this story as evidence of Buddhism's importation into China from India. Also, it's a signal of Buddhism's profound influence in China. Based on this story, the formation of Longnu and Sudhana in this tale are humanoid figures based on their identity as Guan Yin's attendants. However, Buddhism is only occupied in part of the story but with Chinese Taoism thinking to complete. Sadhana's immortality concept is the goal of Taoism practices. Based on the development of Chinese Taoism, the most famous scholars of Chinese Taoism philosophy are Lao Tsu and Zhuang Zi. Lao Tsu was known for his Tao Te Qing, the doctrine of Taoism practice, and Zhuang Zi was known for his butterfly dream of human nature and suchness. Both of their thoughts are used in the Chinese belief system. Those

philosophies were one of the most influential factors in building Chan Buddhism in China as a new Chinese thinking system and spread to Japan as the performance of Zen Buddhism in architecture, lifeways, and others. This Taoist philosophy, with the fusion of Buddhism, showed that traditional Chinese culture and Buddhism Naga culture supported the formation of a new religious deity of the Chinese Naga culture. Then based on both writing records and legends, the dragon culture in China, with the domestic thinking of Taoism from Lao Tzu and Zhuang Zi, created the figure of the Dragon Lady in their belief system.

5. Chinese Chan Buddhism Spread into Japan

With the flow of Chan Buddhism spreading into Japan, some Japanese cultures with the fusion of Zen Buddhism become today's new belief in Japan. The Japanese version's Dragon Lady differs from the dragon figure but the serpent figure in their historical book. Traced back to Japanese earliest history book Kojiki (Records of Ancient Matters), the tale of Susano killed "Yamata no Orochi and saved the maiden of Rice-field" in Emilia Gadeleva's journal article shows the heroism of Susano with the thinking of Japanese Shintoism (P. 165, Susano: One of the Central Gods in Japanese Mythology, Emilia Gadeleva.) Yamata no Orochi is a creature with eight heads serpent. Susano is the cousin of the sun goddess Amaterasu, the ancestor of Japanese people. The serpent figure in Kojiki, with the Shintoism thinking of natural creatures with the fusion of Zen Buddhism, became a new belief system in today's Japan: Snake Lady.

6. Kojiki's snake figure's other use in Buddhism

Snake Lady's figure should be traced from Buddhism and Shintoism tales: Dojoji. The story of Dojoji is about a monk who has a pilgrimage with his monk friend. One day they stayed in a widow's house, and that widow fell in love with this young monk. Then the young monk promised to return to find her after he finished his pilgrimage. However, the young monk changed his way to avoid the widow's house. When the widow asks travelers where this young monk is, she realizes he cheated on her and gets mad at his actions. Then she transformed into a creature like "animal nature kept in human beings," stated by Junwu Tian in the Genesis of Chinese Ethical Literary Criticism, which is like Nuwa and Fuxi in the original Chinese tale: half human half snake figure. However, the head of the serpent is a fusion of the Japanese mask culture called Oni me (monster mask). One exciting thing about those kinds of covers, also called Hannya in Kanji, means *prajna*, as we discussed in class, the highest wisdom. However, the Hannya in this story is described as the women who get cheated on and become the Onryo (vengeful women). The Japanese version's Long nu: Snake Lady has the characteristic of revenge. The story of Dojoji, like the other local thinking, is a fusion with Buddhist Naga culture, formatting the new figure of half monster face, half Naga tail creature in their

belief system nowadays. This new belief system of Serphant Lady become a Japanese Kabuki (drama) play which is popular nowadays with wearing on me and playing instruments to tell people those Zen Buddhism stories. Like Kabuki, emaki (scroll of Buddhist stories) is also used in the temples to teach humans those Buddhist lessons by listening to Etoki's (storyteller) lectures.

7. Comparison Between Chinese and Japanese Naga related figures

Compared with Chinese and Japanese Naga figures of dragon and serpent, there are some similarities and differences based on different perspectives. Based on their belief system, the Chinese Naga figure with Taoism fusion as a humanoid figure with the ability to transform into a human and a dragon with compassions like Guan Yin. However, the Japanese version's Long nu: Serpent lady with Shintoism fusion didn't have this ability but as the half-monster face with a naga tail. Then, their identities are different. Chinese Long Nu is the attendant of Guan Yin, who, as the goddess figure, is formatting. Japanese Long Nu: Serpent Lady is a monster figure with the original formation of vengeful women as humans to create. Despite those differences, their origin tale seems similar to each other: both as half human half dragon or snake tail figure in Chinese mythology and Japanese culture. Also, those two countries are influenced by India's Buddhism Naga culture. Then creatures like dragons and serpents all appear in their culture too.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, Naga culture, which was originally from India, with the fusion of other countries' goddesses, made the formation of new goddesses in their belief system. It may not be accurate to define which country owns Naga culture themselves, but the only thing that there is no doubt about is Buddhism spreading to other countries more or less impacting their belief and cultural systems. The figure of Long Nu in China and the Serpent Lady in Japan are the influential goddesses impacted by Buddhist sculptures.

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