

## Образ дракона в древнекитайской мифологии и литературе

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### **Аннотация**

Статья посвящена образу дракона в китайской мифологии и литературе. Проанализирована символическая система использования образа дракона в погребальных изображениях Древнего Китая.

**Ключевые слова:** дракон, китайская мифология, погребальные изображения.

## The image of the dragon in ancient Chinese mythology and literature

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### **Abstract**

The article describes the image of a dragon in Chinese mythology and literature. The symbolic system of using the dragon image in funerary images of Ancient China is analyzed.

**Keywords:** dragon, Chinese mythology, funerary images.

The art of China is an original and integral historical type that formed over the centuries from different ethnic sources. Note that the world view and attitude of the Chinese people are significantly different from the European world view. There was no consistent development and a change in artistic trends and styles in this country, as in European art. Most likely, it underwent a number of changes in the course of evolution, but it was not specifically directed. Artistic directions do not follow one after another, and «styles» and «schools» are not associated with differences in creative methods, but with technical techniques and materials. In China, «...we find an extraordinarily stable and aesthetically revised life, a consistent world outlook, a complex but lasting fusion of artistic styles. The stylistic unity of Chinese art is the result not only of the profound penetration of Chinese masters into the nature of things, but first of all, their sincere and impeccable trust in life in all its variety» [1, с. 36]. In China, «the measure of all things» is not a man, but nature. There was not a reflection of life in art, but its continuation in movements of a brush and strokes of an ink. Hence is the special aesthetic taste and artistic tact of the traditional art of China.

The inhabitants of the Celestial Empire attach great importance to symbols, both in antiquity and in modern times. Primitive Chinese revered and believed in the dragon, which was the supreme deity in their representations. This is indicated

by the variety archaeological findings. The fact that the dragon was considered the supreme deity is also spoken by his description, in accordance with which the dragon's appearance consists of the characteristic features of other animals. This made him the highest and first being in the whole world. He was the leader of all creatures that inhabit the earth. The time of «appearance» of dragons in culture is interesting: in the Paleolithic epoch they are absent, but in the Mesolithic (about 12 thousand years ago) they appear simultaneously on the whole planet and among all peoples of the founders of ancient civilizations (Egyptians, Sumerians, Chinese, Hindus, Aztecs and Maya).

The theory of the researcher E. Duck is based on the oldest recollection, leaving its roots, bypassing the human world, into the deep layers of the past, in which the image of a dinosaur was preserved. This symbol in China, as in Japan and Korea - is an important basic material of the great symbolic power. In myths about the creation of the world dragons are more often cruel primitive creatures depicted by creepy monsters, breathing fire and destroying all life on their way, which only the gods can destroy. Later, the role of the crushers of dragons is assumed by the heroes and ancestors of noble births (conquest of the unbridled world of nature that is standing at a higher stage of spiritual development of a man). Unlike Western perception in East Asia, the dragon is perceived as a symbol of happiness, which is capable of producing a drink of immortality and good-nature, a peculiar spirit of changes and life itself. The dragon is embodied in many legends, and in the very fact of including him in the number of constellations of the night sky.

Most myths and legends tell about of dragons' influence on the world. «They are able for centuries to hide in the secret caves of the highest mountain peaks or to doze at the bottom of the deep ocean, waiting for the awakening hour» [2, c. 114]. So, with the development of agriculture, the Chinese allocate a period of awakening of nature, which corresponds to the raising of the dragon's head, which means that its image is closely related to the weather. It is said that one of the worst floods in Asian history happened because the mortal offended the dragon. In many legends and fairytales dragons play a dominant role, and they are the main motive in the visual arts and art craft. Thanks to the symbol, Chinese characters were also created. According to the legend, «the great god Fu Xi, who taught people to build a fire, get subsistence by hunting and fishing and eat fried meat, he once strolled along the banks of the Yellow River and saw a dragon. Studying the bizarre signs on his back, formed by cracks and traces of bird's legs, Fu Xi invented the first eight symbolic signs - they were the beginning of the writing of Chinese people» [3, c. 67].

Drawing a portrait of the dragon, it should be noted that in the art of Western Europe, the typical appearance of dragons was formed largely by the blessed medieval heraldry. Their images bear a strong resemblance to dinosaurs that some people consider that these extinct animals are a prototype of fairy dragons. However, in world mythology a word «dragon» is used to refer to a variety of monsters. They can be winged, with large half-dog and half-lion heads, as in the myths of China and Japan, or with small heads like a lizard, like in the fairytales of

the other peoples. Outside of heraldry, they are often depicted as a snake. It is no accident that dragons are associated with water in different parts of the world.

Another of their characteristic features - fire, perhaps it is inspired by astronomical phenomena, for example, comets. Thus, in 793 the «fire dragons» were observed over the kingdom of Northumbria, which began to take shape during the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain. This phenomenon was interpreted as a foreshadowing of the future invasion of the Vikings. The primary meaning of the image of the Chinese dragon (traditional 龙 long) - in Chinese mythology - is the symbol of the good beginning yang (unlike the dragon of Europe) and the Chinese nation as a whole. This image is also associated with an element of water. In honor of the dragon, an annual festival of dragon boats is established. According to Chinese beliefs, the serpent-moon lives in rivers, lakes and seas, but he is also able to soar into the skies. It clearly shows the traces of the deity of moisture and rain, originally associated with the cult of fertility.

Rituals to evoke rain did not do without the images of the dragon as early as the VI century B.C. The early systematization of knowledge about dragons, with a critical conclusion, was carried out by Wang Chun (1st century AD) in the treatise «Lun Heng» 论衡 (Long Xu 龙虚). Externally, the Chinese dragon is described in terms of similarities: a head of a vertex, a horn of a deer, eyes of a demon, a neck of a snake, scales of a carp (scales should be 81 or 117), claws of an eagle, paws of a tiger and ears of a cow. However, the images often show a discrepancy with this description. On the head of the dragons is their most important accessory - the cone on the crown, thanks to which they can leave without wings. However, it cannot be infrequently seen on the images. The size of the Chinese dragons is from a meter to more than 300 meters from the Great Jian-Than. Eastern dragons usually have a pearl in a mouth, under their chin, or in their claws. Obviously, these kinds of pearls are sources of the energy of the dragon, and they also help the dragons to climb into the sky. Female Chinese dragons lay eggs, but some cubs hatch through a thousand years. Their birth is accompanied by wild rudiments: powerful meteor showers, thunderstorms and a large hail.

In China dragons are called the word «Long» - this is a collective overview. There are four types of Longs: Tien-Long - the Heavenly Dragon that protects the halls of the gods; Shen-Long - dragons-spirits that control the wind and rain; Di-Long - Earth dragons that control rivers and water on Earth, as well as Fut's-Long - dragons of the underworld that guard precious metals and stones. Some dragons manage rivers in the North, South, East and West. The overlord of all river dragons is the Great Chien-Tang, the color of blood, and that has a fire mane and a length of 900 feet. Other kinds of dragons: Ju-Long – the scaly dragon (blue), Yin-Long – the dragon with wings, Ju-Long - the dragon with horns (blue), the hornless Zhi-Long (red, white and green), Pan-Long is connected to the ground. The Chinese dragons can also be black, white, red or yellow, among which the latter is considered the most important. Each dragon is born from gold of the same color as its skin. Age of the dragon can also be determined by the color of the skin. Yellow, red, white and black dragons are a thousand years old, blue is eight hundred.

Dragons can change their forms, including taking human form. According to the beliefs of the Chinese, they are deterred or controlled by the leaves of the Calerytry panicled (Iranian name), five-colored silk thread, wax, iron or centipede.

As the king of animals, the dragon served as a symbol of the imperial power. According to the Chinese myth, the Yellow Emperor turned to the dragon at the end of his life and soared into the heavens. A real emperor must have a birthmark in a shape of a dragon. The imperial throne of many dynasties was called the throne of the dragon. During the Qing Dynasty, the Chinese dragon decorated the state banner. For the wearing of clothes with figures of a dragon the commoner was subject to the death penalty. Artists portrayed them as kind and clever, but even if the dragon is aggressive he symbolizes military valor. The Chinese people have one proverb: «to wish that children become dragons», that is, they become clever, capable people. An ambiguous attitude towards dragons can indicate that dragons were intelligent beings, because only developed culture has the notion of morality and is capable of producing both «good» and «evil» representatives.

One of such first representatives of China of the Qin Dynasty, having changed the centuries-old course of the history, and then the destiny of the people, was the emperor Shi Huang-di, who was nicknamed at the end of the Warring States Period (5th-3rd centuries BC) «Dragonic ancestor» of the Chinese nation or the son of the heavenly dragon. In the next, the Chinese have strengthened the belief that all emperors are descendants of dragons with the ability to take any form and magnitude, shine in darkness or be invisible. The cult of the dragon in the Celestial Empire has acquired a very diverse and colorful outlines. In one of the legends it is pointed out that the Yellow Dragon is the beginning of the beginning, the seed of the origin of the Universe, the totem of the kind of the emperor Huang-di, who heads the top five rulers of Ancient China.

The Yellow Dragon is the emblem of the emperor (nine dragons with five claws on their paws could only be depicted on the imperial attire). He passed a law that only he can wear a five-fingered dragon, as the most powerful among all the colored dragons that depicted on clothes and everything that belongs to his Imperial Highness. Anyone who could violate this law was immediately executed. Here is the main meaning of the symbol is observance of order and obedience. By the XVI century Chinese authors have combined several fantastic creatures, some of which have appeared long time ago in Chinese sculpture or arts and crafts, under the general title «Nine sons of the dragon» (龙生九子). There are several variants of this list. According to one tradition that is presented in the book «Sheng An Waiji» (升庵外集) by the poet Yang Sheng (1488-1559), the sons of the dragon are in order of seniority. Today, the significance of the symbol in the life of the Chinese people has weakened, but despite this, the Chinese remain committed to the memory of the ancients, observing the cult of the Dragon as an integral part of their culture.

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