

Construction on Legends from Cultural Memory to Daily Life—Centered on the legend of Dayu in Songshan

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Abstract: Cultural memory points to the absolute past, daily life points to the present, and there is an absolute time difference between the past and the present. How can people successfully transform the ancient cultural memory into the communicative memory in daily life? This paper focuses on the Songshan area, and through field research, it is found that people make myths “localized” and “humanized” through interpretation, construction and reproduction according to the current and their own needs. The myth is the common memory of the Chinese nation, which is gradually transformed into a local legend closely linked with the regional society and becomes a part of the people's daily life.

Habwakh's collective memory and Jan Assmann's communicative and cultural memory are all discussions about group memory, and the theories of them cannot be simply equivalent, but there is a clear inheritance relationship. Jan Assmann believes that Habwakh's collective memory is a kind of communicative memory, and his book “Cultural Memory” focuses on discussion about another form of collective memory - cultural memory, and discusses in detail the difference between the two: communicative memory is the memory of daily life, which individuals in the group acquire through personal experience or reproduced by others, generally lasting in three to four generations, and 80 years is a boundary value; While cultural memory is about myths and legends or memories that occurred in the absolute past, preserved with the help of words, images, rituals, etc., and passed on by full-time personnel, and it is acquired by individuals mainly through festivals, celebrations and rituals. [1] It can be seen that cultural memory points to the absolute past, as far as prehistoric myths; The communication memory points to the present, to the experience, contact and communication of individuals in daily life. Both emphasize the reconstruction of the past based on the present, and the ancient Dayu myth has been transformed into local legends and entered the daily lives of the people as the connection with the regional society has been strengthened. There is a huge time lag between the distant “past” and the recent “present”, and how people successfully transform it, this article focuses on the myths and legends of Dayu in the Songshan region of Henan.

1. From cultural memory to daily life: Myths turn into legends

Zhang Zhenli discussed the “localization of famous classical myths in China” in “The Rheological Examination of Classical Myths in the Central Plains”, pointing out that during circulation, once myths are integrated with historical figures, events and local specific symbols, they must be

transformed into legends.” [2]”Localization” is an important sign of myth transforming into legend.

1.1. The myth and legend of Dayu as cultural memory

In ancient texts, the mythological features of Dayu’s narrative are very obvious. For example, in “Classic of Mountains and Seasthe”, “human world was flooded. Gun wanted to stop the flood without the consent of the Emperor of Heaven, he stole the land (sand) from the Emperor of Heaven, which caused his anger. He was killed by Zhu Rong of the Heaven Emperor's Criminalization School in the suburb of the Feather Mountain. Gun had a son named Dayu. The emperor ordered Dayu to take his father's place and continue to manage the flood and stabilize Jiuzhou.[3]” In “The Songs of Chu”, “Gun has been confined to Yushan for a long time, why didn't he let him go for three years? Dayu was born from the belly of the Gun, how the method of water treatment changed. How does Ying Long draw the ground with a tail...How do rivers and seas flow smoothly?”[4] In the later records and annotations of the Dayu myth, places appeared, such as the embodiment of place names in the Songshan area, in “National Language” when the Xia tribe was developing and growing, the god Zhurong came to Chongshan to protect the prosperity and safety of the Xia clan, “Later, the Yu clan came to invade and the Chongbo Gun protected this place.” Wei Zhao explained, “Chong, that is, Chonggao mountain. The Xia people live in Yangcheng, close to the Chonggao mountains. “ [5]In “Records of the Historian”, after three years of mourning, Yu fled to Yangcheng in order to cede the imperial throne to Shun's son Shang Jun[6]. In “Mencius”, three years after mourning, Yu avoided Shun's son and went to Yangcheng... after three years of mourning, Yi avoided Yu's son and went to the north of Mount Mi.” [7]Early folk narrative forms such as myths, legends and stories were not strictly distinguished, and later defined for research convenience: myths focused on gods; Legends focus on people, with “places and names to follow”.

1.2. Current performance of cultural memory

As a cultural memory, the narrative of “the mother of Qi turning into stone” is rich in mythology. “Huainanzi”, “Book of Han”, “Mu Tianzi's Biography”, “Classic of Mountains and Seas” and so on have “ the mother of Qi turning into stone “ recorded, and the core plot is similar: Dayu's wife heard the drums before bringing food to her husband; Dayu turned himself into a bear to open up mountains and rivers; His wife was ashamed to see Dayu turn into a bear; Under the Song High Mountain (also known as Song Mountain, in the north of Dengfeng County, Henan Province), she turned into stone; After the stone cracked, Qi was born. The “Qimu Stone” is located under the Banzai Peak of Mount Taimuro, half upright and half lying flat, and the fracture surface coincides. The unique appearance of the Qimu stone inevitably arouses the curiosity and imagination of the public, and the ancient myths and legends explain its origin and appearance, coupled with the continuous interpretation, reconstruction and production of the people, and gradually develop into many interrelated legend groups such as the mother of Qi turning into stone; Dayu excavated Xuanyuan Mountain, Dayu turned himself into a bear to open up mountains and rivers, Dayu's wife heard the drums before bringing food to her husband, The Origin of Banzai Mountain, Ring Drum Stone, Take care of the baby in place of the older sister, Five Finger Ridge and so on. The legend of the stone of Qi's mother has not ended until “the stone breaks through the north and Qi was born”, Qi 's mother turned into stone, who will take care of Xia Qi? There is a folk legend that “takes care of the baby in place of her sister”: “Tu Shanjiao turned in stone, the baby was just born and had no one to take care of, so his younger sister Tu Shanyao married Dayu to raise Xia Qi.” ¹Dengfeng still has the saying “brother-in-law marries sister-in-law, nephew does not suffer losses”. Tu Shanyao took care of the baby instead of his

¹Interviewee: Chang Songmu; Interviewer: Gao Ge; Venue: Under the Longevity Peak; Date: June 14, 2020.

sister, Dayu continued to treat the water, and the people worried that his sister would also turn into stone, so the legend of Five Finger Ridge was born: “Dayu opened a mountain on the north mountain of Tangzhuang, and turned into a bear, Tu Shanyao took Xia Qi to see him, and when he saw her, Dayu was afraid that Tu shanyao would follow his sister's old path, and hurriedly shrunk and deformed, and as a result, a bear paw did not come and changed back, remaining on the mountain, becoming the Five Finger Ridge.”¹ “The tragedy of the “the mother of Qi turning into stone” has been adapted to meet the emotional needs of the people. The content of myths is ancient and magical, and the people produce groups of legends according to their own needs and imagination. Ancient cultural memories are passed on in daily life, and people turn myths into legends through “localization” and “humanization”.

2. Cultural memory enters daily life: myths become legends

Dayu mythology is constantly interconstructed with local landscapes and folk beliefs, transformed into local legends, landscape and belief connect “past” and “present”, and ancient cultural memories enter people's daily lives through landscape narratives and belief rituals.

2.1. The legend of Dayu and the local landscape build a memory space

Dayu legend attached to local natural objects, mountains, rocks, caves, rivers, passes, mounds are the core of Dayu legend. For example, Taimur Mountain, Shaomuro Mountain, Wuzhiling, Jiaoshan Mountain, the Stone of Qi's mother, Shiniu Stone, Pinggu Stone, Plaque Hanging Stone Cliff, Test Axe Stone, Yu Cave, Shiqi Cave, Ying River, Jiao River, Shao River, Demon Pool, Xuanyuan Pass, Shiyang Pass, the Tomb of Qi's mother, etc. have become the “core objects” of the legend. In addition, the legend of Dayu and the place names are mutually verified, such as Qinshui Village, Haizhu Village, Xiazhuang, Yudonghe, Xiadi, Bafang Village and other place names are attached to the legend of Dayu. Bafang Village, located in Jicheng (Guyangcheng) Town, Dengfeng City, discovered in 1956 the “Bafang Village Longshan Cultural Site”, that is, the “Wangchenggang Site”, and the “Yudu Yangcheng” place flowed from the academic circle into the local cultural circle, and the confidence and motivation of the people to tell and produce legends were enhanced, and a new interpretation of the village name appeared: the place of “Yu meeting with the princes” was Bafang. Legends are closely related to landscapes, which give meaning and life to landscapes, making them symbolic of cultural memory, and landscapes enhance the credibility of legends, so that universal myths are associated with regional societies and transformed into local legends.

2.2. The legend of Dayu is integrated with folk beliefs to enrich daily life

In daily life, Dayu legends are blended with folk beliefs. The people placed Dayu in the genealogy of local gods to enhance its regionality and credibility, such as the legend of Dayu intertwined with the belief in the water god and the ox god, the latter two developed with the extremely important position of water and cattle in agricultural areas. First, Dayu myths and legends and water god beliefs. Frequent droughts and floods in the Songshan area, and the coexistence of water advantages and disadvantages, have promoted the development of local water god beliefs. Dayu is both the “god of water” and the “god of rain” in the local area, and the temple of the three officials in Dengfeng City is called the Temple of Water Three Officials, and the water official Dayu is in the middle. There is an explanatory legend circulating in the seat: “After the temple was repaired, the heavenly official said to the earth official, go to see that the cultivation was completed and call him, and the local official pushed the water official to go, and when Dayu came to see it, the temple was repaired, and he sat in the middle.” The second old man couldn't wait, go and take a look, sit on the east side, and

finally the heavenly official came, so he had to sit on the west side.”² The people are most interested in the expressions of the three officials in the old temple, and it is said that the water official is happy, the heavenly official is angry, and the local official is indifferent. The official ranking of Yao, Shun, Yu is fixed, but in the temple, Dayu is honored, and the people rerank Yao, Shun, Yu according to their own needs, which is a huge contrast with the official ranking. Second, the legend of Dayu is fused with the belief in the bull god. There is a Yuwang Temple on Yuwang Mountain in Yuzhou City, which is said to have been pulled from the south of the mountain to the north of the mountain overnight, so it is also called the Lahwang Temple, and the local people call it “a temple that can run”. “Legend has it that one night the villagers dreamed of a white-bearded old man borrowing an ox. When they got up the next day, the cow was lying sweaty, did not eat or move, opened an ingot, and found that the Yuwang Temple had gone from the south of the mountain to the north of the mountain. Later, King Yu forgot to reward the ox, and when the ox went to ask for the seal, he made a cow king.”³ Most of the temples sit north facing south, while Yuwang Temple is the opposite, the special orientation promotes the production of legends, the temple moves “from the south of the mountain to the north of the mountain”, and the ox goes to complete the most reasonable. The belief in the bull god is extremely common in agricultural areas, and in the last century there were almost every village with the temple of the ox king, and legend has it that the supremacy of the king of Yu was used to raise the legitimacy of the bull god belief.

3. Cultural memory transformed into daily life practice: myths turned into legends

One of the differences between myth and legend is that the narrative object focuses on gods or people, and when the godhood of the narrative object weakens and the personality continues to strengthen, myth gradually transforms into legend. Dayu in the Songshan area is a god, a human and an ancestor, and the local area strategically promotes the change of Dayu's identity according to development needs, and Dayu walks down the altar and enters secular society, incarnating as a person with pyrotechnics, and is constructed as the ancestor of certain surnames.

3.1. God to man: the gods descend to the mortals, and reincarnate in “Shi Niutun” with the help of corpses

According to legend, Dayu's father Cang (known locally as “Chongbo” and “Chongbo Gun”) was a white horse god: The black dragon true monarch in the sky rode a white horse, this divine horse is the enlivener of Chongbo Gun, he went down to Buffalo Tun in Songshan.⁴ “Gun is a god under the ordinary, and Yu's birth is naturally not ordinary. The famous myth and legend in the literature that “Dayu was born from the belly of Gun” has a foreign text in the Songshan area, “After Gun was killed, Zhurong cut open Gun's belly, and a small dragon flew out of Gun's belly, and became Dayu on the top of Songshan Mountain.”⁵ The more widespread local legend of “the rain king descends to the mortal and borrows the corpse to reincarnate” is another way of birth of Dayu, “Dayu's enlivener is the 'rain king' of heaven, the rain book was picked up by the dragon, causing a flood in the world, he next treated the water and came up with a way to borrow the corpse to reincarnate in order to save time.” Finally, he was reincarnated through the body of Chongbo Gun's son Wen Ming. ⁴Dayu borrowed the son of Gun and the corpse of Wen Mei to reincarnate Buffalo Tun. Father is God, so his son is God, whether it is the white horse god of mortals, the rain king of mortals or the incarnation of the dragon, Gun's and Yu's godhead has turned to personality, and the place of mortals has been

²Interviewee: Song Jieshi; Interviewer: Gao Ge; Location: Shuisanguanmiao Village, Tangzhuang Township, Dengfeng City; Time: September 18, 2020.

³Interviewee: Fang Guilan; Interviewer: Gao Ge; Venue: Yuwang Temple, Fanggang Town, Yuzhou City; Time: September 10, 2020.

⁴Interviewee: Han Youzhi; Interviewer: Gao Ge; Location: the intersection of Aimin Road and Caiyuan Road in Dengfeng; Date: July 5, 2020.

⁵Interviewee: Chang Songmu; Interviewer: Gao Ge; Location: Zujiazhuang Village, Dengfeng City; Date: June 14, 2020.

concretized as “Buffalo Tun”, the color of myth decreases, and the element of legend increases.

3.2. From hero to ancestor: building an ancestral hall in hometown

Dengfeng's transformation of Dayu from hero to ancestor identity was mainly through the construction of “Dayu's hometown Zujiazhuang” and the construction of Dayu Temple, as well as ancestor worship ceremonies.

The title of “Dayu's hometown Zujiazhuang” has undergone two major interpretations and constructions. The first is the construction of the legend of “Yu was born in Shiniu tun”. The village under Shaomuro Mountain is called 'Yiliushiniu tun', the common people calling it “Buffalo Tun” turned sound, and it is also called “Shui'ou tun”. The pronunciation is different in each village, and Xuantian Temple is called “Shuiniu tun'er”.⁶ In addition, the Zujiazhuang has Shiniu stone and Xirang mound, and a stone has cracks shaped like a small dragon, which is said to be able to cure diseases when touched, and is known as Shiniu stone; Shiniu stone is located on a mound in the north of Zujiazhuang Village, and the mound grows with the water and will not be flooded, and it is said that the soil was stored here by Gun, and it was not cleaned when the soil was confiscated. Second, Zuo Zhuang changed its name to Zujiazhuang. There are records of “Zuojiazhuang” on the tombstone of Zuo Zhuang Pu's surname and the family tree of the Liu family and Pu family, and the locals believe that Zuojiazhuang is called Zuo Zhuang due to transliteration. “In this village, 'Shang Zhuang' is pronounced 'Sha Zhuang', 'Zhang Zhuang' is pronounced 'Zhazhuang', 'Wang Zhuang' is pronounced 'Wazhuang', 'Liu Zhuang' is pronounced 'Lie Zhuang', 'Geng Zhuang' is pronounced 'Ge Zhuang', and 'Zujiazhuang' is pronounced 'Zuo Zhuang’.”⁵ The Dayu inheritance group believes that the name of Zujiazhuang means the place where the ancestors live, and there is a local legend of “Yu was born in Shiniutun”, and finally changed its name to Zujiazhuang in 2014.

Zujiazhuang built the Yuwang ancestral hall and resumed the worship ceremony, clarifying the identity of Dayu as the ancestor. According to legend, “Before liberation, there was a Yuwang Temple in the east of the village (also temple of three officials), which was later demolished, and now it has been built again in another place.”⁵ The old temple is replaced by a new ancestral hall, the “ancestral hall” is the place where the clan worships their ancestors, and there is now a stone stele of “Yu Hundred Family Names” at the entrance of the Yu King Ancestral Hall, with 136 surnames of Yu descent. In recent years, the temple festival has attracted attention to the ceremonies such as the recognition of ancestors and the return of the descendants of Dayu, and the surnames of Bao, Xia, Pu, and Yi have come from all over the world to commemorate and erect stone monuments to commemorate them. From Dayu's hometown to the construction of King Yu's Ancestral Hall and the restoration of the ritual of worshiping Yu, Dayu's identity has undergone a clear change - the hero of water control has become an ancestor, spanning thousands of years of time and space, and people's worship of Dayu has not decreased. “The ancestors whose names have been handed down and remembered by future generations are only those ancestors whose memories have been turned into objects of worship, and they have at least maintained a fictitious relationship with these ancestors.[8]” Although this connection is fictitious and imaginary, the connection between descendants and ancestors is closer and more real than that between people and gods or heroes, and the descendants have a stronger sense of pride and identity, and have a greater sense of initiative and responsibility for the transmission of legends.

Dayu's transformation from god to man exists in the daily life of the people in the form of oral legends and folk beliefs. The transformation of Dayu from a hero to an ancestor has not only remained at the level of words or symbols, but also embodied the renaming of his hometown and the construction of Dayu Ancestral Temple. With the participation of the people, the ancient cultural

⁶Interviewee: Gao Nansong; Interviewer: Gao Ge; Location: Zujiazhuang Village, Dengfeng City; Date: June 14, 2020.

memory has been transformed into the daily communication memory of the people, and has been embodied into real objects. Through interpretation, construction and reproduction, the people “localize” and “humanize” the Dayu myth as a cultural memory and become a part of the people's daily life.

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