

# *A New Exploration of Nu Wa Creation of Man*

Jinglin Zhang<sup>a</sup>, Xiaoyu Zhang

*College of Liberal Arts, Chongqing Normal University, Chongqing, China*  
*<sup>a</sup>laishu6963@163.com*

**Keywords:** Nu Wa's Creation of Man; Artificial Nu Wa; Mythical connotations; National cultural confidence

**Abstract:** The existing teaching interpretation of "Nu Wa Made People" mainly focuses on explaining the structure of mythological texts and the study of Nu Wa image, while there is less research on the national culture and the origin of ancestors that exist in it, especially the artificial Nu Wa thought in "Nu Wa creating humans", which deserves further exploration. The story of "Nu Wa creating humans" depicted by our ancestors is more to illustrate our own origins and strengthen the connotation of national culture. In comparison with the creation myths of foreign and other ethnic groups, we can draw inspiration from the dialectical relationship between "God establishing humans" and "human independence": self-reliance is a hard truth. And we need to use this to enhance students' confidence in national culture.

## 1. Introduction

"The Creation of Man by Nu Wa" is selected from Unit 6 of the seventh grade textbook of the Ministry of Education. This unit includes various types of articles such as fairy tales, poems, myths, fables, etc. An important source of stimulating students' interest in learning is their curiosity and love for mythological works. As Professor Qian Liqun said, "Chinese education mainly cultivates students' pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty, their longing and imagination for the ideal world on the other side, their great care for humanity, nature, and the universe, their curiosity about unknown things, and thus their inner and outer enthusiasm and vitality of life." Traditional Chinese teaching mainly focuses on the image of "Nu Wa" in this myth. "Up, the aim is to explore the origin of humanity and the ever-changing character image of Nu Wa through mythological clothing. But taking "Nu Wa creating humans" as an example, based on this, we should broaden our horizons in human mythological stories, attempt to uncover the outer layer of mythology, and explore the construction and tracing of national culture. It is not only Nu Wa who created humans, but also humans who created Nu Wa. This article intends to briefly elaborate on the following aspects and attempt to explore "Nu Wa creating humans" from a new perspective.

## 2. The Origin of Nu Wa's Creation of Man

Nu Wa is the ancestor of the Chinese nation in ancient Chinese mythology, and also a symbol of maternal civilization in ancient times. Nu Wa kneaded earth to create humans, refined stones to repair the heavens, and was the prototype of the mother who created (gave birth to) humanity, as

well as the prototype of the savior who saved humanity from disasters such as water and fire. The image of Nu Wa is mentioned in books such as the Classic of Mountains and Seas, huai-nan tzu, and The Songs of Chu. Guo Pu's annotation in "The Classic of Mountains and Seas: The Great Wilderness of the West": "Nu Wa, an ancient goddess and emperor, with a snake like body and a human face, undergoes seventy transformations in a day."<sup>[1]</sup> "The Yellow Emperor gave birth to yin and yang, the parallel lines gave birth to ears and eyes, and the mulberry forest gave birth to arms and hands. Therefore, this Nu Wa has undergone seventy transformations."<sup>[2]</sup>In the Book of Songs of Chu, Tianwen, there is a saying: "Nu Wa has a body, who is the craftsman?" Wang Yi's annotations: "Nu Wa has a human head and a snake body." From this, it can be seen that Nu Wa's body is a human head and a snake body with high magical power, capable of transforming into seventy in a day, and is an omniscient and omnipotent god. As long as the word "God" is mentioned, the people always maintain a reverence for it. The Book of Rites - Sacrificial Rites states: "Clouds can emerge from mountains, forests, rivers, valleys, and hills, creating wind and rain. When monsters are seen, they are all called gods." Therefore, the image of gods in the depiction and narration of ancient ancestors is always full of magical and romantic charm. In ancient Chinese mythology and legends, the gods Pao Xi Shi, Shen Nong Shi, You Chao Shi, Sui Ren Shi were all created by the Chinese ancestors, such as Nu Wa is no exception, a god created by the primitive people through bold imagination. Why did the ancestors want to create God? Why do humans imagine that the species of God is creating humans? The myth of the female snail creating humans, although widely circulated in the Pre Qin period, is less recorded in various classics of the pre Qin period. The most important pre Qin classics are the "Six Classics" edited by Confucius in his later years. The reason for the loss of records may be related to the pre Qin Confucianism's disdain for common sayings in the Analects, which states that "the son does not speak strangely, the power is greatly chaotic, and the spirit is greatly chaotic". "According to the records, the pre Qin Confucianism may have regarded the legend of the female snail making humans as a strange and chaotic deity and did not record it, but it was not until the Later Han Dynasty that Ying Shao's "General Principles of Customs" clearly and specifically recorded it:

As the saying goes, when heaven and earth were opened up and there were no people, Nu Wa kneaded the yellow earth to become a human, and her theatrical work was too much to supply. Instead, she drew ropes into the mud and raised them as if People. Therefore, those who are wealthy and wealthy are from the yellow soil; The poor and mediocre are like letting down others.<sup>[3]</sup>

From this, it can be seen that mythology is the interpretation made by our ancestors to explain where they came from, why they came from, and how they came from. It is their imagination that they are temporarily unable to make scientific responses to natural and cultural phenomena. And "The Creation of Man by Nu Wa" portrays the beautiful and romantic expectations in the hearts of ancient ancestors, that we were born into the divine race and should receive the protection of the gods, so that we can reproduce and develop in the world. Yuan Ke said in "Selected Interpretation of Ancient Mythology": "From myths such as gods creating humans and often 'imitating the shape of gods to become humans', we can see the pride of primitive humans as 'humans' caused by their initial victories in long-term struggles with nature and other animals. Humans are created by gods themselves and resemble gods (in fact, it is exactly the opposite), which sets them apart from other living beings. This determines the special position of humans who dominate everything in the world. The significance of the myth of Nu Wa kneaded loess to become a human also lies in this."<sup>[4]</sup> The reason why humans can become the rulers of the world and the center of all things is entirely determined by the divine status of God. In the history of modern Chinese literature, since the May Fourth Movement, the myth of creating people has received attention from various aspects. Tracing back to the origin and questioning the reason why humans are human beings constitute the inherent ideological framework of modern writers to restate the myth of Nu Wa creating humans. Lu Xun's

"Mending the Sky" begins by describing the story of Nu Wa's creation of humans, with a grand and romantic style, followed by a detailed description of the myth of Nu Wa's creation of humans in modern novels. Yuan Ke tells the mythological story of Nu Wa's creation of humans in "Ancient Chinese Mythology". The note in the text reads: "See Mr. Lu Xun's" New Compilation of Stories: Mending the Sky. "This indicates that Yuan Ke's narration was influenced by Lu Xun. Mr. Yuan Ke, the author, seems to have the magical power of perceiving the imagination of our ancestors in the modern article "Nu Wa's Creation of Man". He continues to use his bold and novel imagination, using plain yet vivid, and even some "down-to-earth" narrative language, combined with the depiction of character writing, details, etc., to expand and recreate the ancient myths recorded in the translation and annotation of ancient Chinese literature. Perfectly presenting a goddess image that is full of emotions, vivid and natural, cute and romantic, it also makes the reading of the myth of Nu Wa's creation clearer and clearer for middle school students.

The myth of human creation does not only exist in the Central Plains region, but also in places such as the West and the Manchu ethnic group. There are many similarities in its content and details, revealing the similarities of early human culture; The differences in mythological content reflect the historical circumstances of different ethnic groups and highlight the unique charm of national culture.

### 3. Comparison of Myths of Human Creation in Different Regions

#### 3.1. Comparison with Greek Mythology

Greek mythology plays an important role in Western mythology, and various Western mythological stories also possess imaginative imagination. In the process of expanding outward, the western people gave birth to heroes and worshipped them, resulting in many heroic fairy tales intertwined with human beings and gods, which is known as "Greek mythology" The creation myth is the restoration of human reality, as well as the contemplation, interpretation, and artistic recreation of the world. Marx defined mythology as "the natural and social forms themselves processed through the imagination of the people in an unconscious artistic way."<sup>[5]</sup> In our national myth of "Nu Wa creating humans", the deity who created humans is women. Therefore, it is generally believed that the birth time of this myth should be in the matrilineal society, and collection is more important. Therefore, women hold an important position in this myth. And like Nu Wa, the male god Prometheus in Greek mythology was the one who made humans out of soil. Both Nu Wa and Prometheus chose to refer to their own expressions when endowing the human form, representing the differences in thinking styles between the East and the West. However, Prometheus took an extra step in spiritual empowerment. The people created by Nu Wa have a unity of spirit and flesh, so their people also have a strong bias towards the overall situation; Prometheus, on the other hand, created clay figurines and added animal personalities one by one. Finally, Athena breathed air and bestowed upon the clay figurines the spiritual and intellectual qualities possessed by the deities, which were clearly two parts of the spiritual flesh. This is also deeply related to the Western Binary opposition ideology of man and flesh, life and death, good and evil. Both Chinese and Western mythologies of human creation reflect the Earthiness, partly due to its widespread availability and strong plasticity; On the other hand, due to the worship of the mother earth and the land, the land, like the goddess, controls the secrets of reproduction and reproduction. So the myth of Nu Wa creating humans can reflect the dependence of the ancestors on women at that time, as well as the kind and contented aspects of the national character over a long period of historical accumulation. The myth of Prometheus creating humans in ancient Greece reflects the strong desire of the Greek people to conquer and transform nature.

In the end, Prometheus gave up using soil to build humans and chose to use stones. Upon closer

examination of the reasons, it is not difficult to find that the existence of this difference is also due to the geographical differences between China and the West. The two materials used by Nu Wa to create humans are: One is soil, the other is water. China is an inland civilization and agricultural country that cannot do without land and water sources. Before Nu Wa, Pan Gu After death, it transformed into water and soil, so Nu Wa not only created humans according to her own appearance, but also used divine beings Givens. Therefore, there is a distinct concept of valuing virtue in the Chinese mythology of human creation, which is not only about the gods living on the desolate and impoverished ancient land, Helping primitive humans establish their roots through selfless virtues, and humans themselves are constantly pursuing both internal and external cultivation and harmonious coexistence. On the other hand, Greece is a coastal civilization with many mountains, rocks, and limited arable land, which highlights the characteristics of using stones. The various shrines and shrines in Greece are all made of stone, and the stones lost by Deucalion and Pyrrhus have all turned into humans. More importantly, they have endowed humans with the properties of stones, which are sturdy and full of toughness. To some extent, this is also a manifestation of the concept of valuing power in Greek culture, which is "natural selection, survival of the fittest", because the people made of soil are bound to be replaced by the striving and enterprising spirit of the stone generation.

In summary, the myths of human origin in China and Greece have both chosen soil as the material for human creation. China has always only had soil, but Greece ultimately rejected soil with stones. This not only reflects the differences in geographical environments between China and the West, but also reflects the cultural values of China and foreign countries. Therefore, the myths of human origin in China and Greece are different in the history of China and Greece. And as Marx explained, mythology is also a social form itself, which carries the kindness and simplicity that the Chinese nation hopes for. This is also a national culture that middle school students need to better understand and appreciate from the comparison of Chinese and Western myths.

### 3.2. Comparison with Manchu Mythology

As a coastal ethnic group, the Manchu people have long relied on fishing and hunting as their main economic production method. Therefore, animals and fish in high mountains and rivers are their source of food and clothing. Their understanding of themselves and animals far exceeds their understanding of the land. As a result, the myth of creating humans inevitably relies on bones and meat as raw materials. The Manchu people believe that the origin of humanity comes from the three goddesses Abkahh, Banamheh, and Woldoh. All three goddesses were originally created by women, so women are kind-hearted and warm-hearted. Later men were made from the bones and flesh extracted from the bodies of Abkahh and Woldoh. Therefore, the characteristics of men are also warm and kind-hearted. Unlike Nu Wa who used loess to create humans, the Manchu ancestors had reached a relatively advanced level of understanding of the basic structure of the human body. Manchu mythology emphasized that humans are composed of the bones and flesh of gods, intending to emphasize that humans and gods should be connected by bones and flesh, closely connected, and coexisting equally. There is no essential difference between the two in terms of appearance and structural composition, which is also a manifestation of shamanism humanism and the concept of equality of all things. Even in some family worship songs, "people" are referred to as the masters of "gods", such as in the spring worship song "Spring Breeze God Song" of the Oroqen ethnic group, which sings:

My name is Xie En, and I am the ancestor god of the human world. I will use my hands to sprinkle gold all over the world... I will use my hands to deliver groups of ferrets to my master's hands, so that my master can feel the warmth and happiness of spring.

However, Nu Wa's creation of humans from loess did not reflect a strong humanistic ideology. People in the Central Plains often referred to Nu Wa as the Creator or God of Creation. The *Shuowen Jiezi* explains that "Nu Wa, the ancient goddess and saint, is also the one who transforms all things." Nu Wa is regarded as the highest deity, surpassing all things in the world. Therefore, since birth, humans have a higher level than other birds and animals. The reason why humans can become the rulers of the world depends entirely on the divine status of God, because humans are created by God themselves and are the closest living organisms to God. This kind of thinking can also be reflected in the ending of the myth of Nu Wa creating humans, which explains the issues of wealth and the sources of superiority and inferiority in the human class. But upon closer examination of its reasons, when myths spread to the slave society where private ownership had already formed, the emergence of the "rich and poor" and "poor and lowly" in the myth of Nu Wa creating humans was also due to the ruling class's efforts to deify their ancestors and consolidate their rule, promoting the idea that wealth, status, and poverty were bestowed upon them by gods and spirits from heaven and earth. This "divine bestowal" theory is a manifestation of the embryonic stage of the "divine bestowal of monarchy" theory under the feudal autocratic monarchy system, and is not the truth that Nu Wa intended to tell at the beginning of the creation of the myth of human creation. Referring to Aristotle's view on mythology, the final part of the Ying Shao version is what Aristotle said about "the gradual expansion of mythology in the future due to the maintenance of rituals, persuasion of the people, and other practical functions." By deleting things that gradually expanded and attached to myths later on, one can grasp the original meaning of myths. The original intention of the mythological version of Nu Wa's creation of humans described by Ying Shao may only be that the Chinese people found a sacred source for the emergence of humanity. But it is not meaningless for Ying Shao to add additional information. His version of the story provides a theoretical explanation for the hierarchical differences in unequal societies. In today's textbooks, it is also conscious to delete the later discussion about human class. Yuan Ke's version contains an appreciation for various virtues of Nu Wa, reflecting Nu Wa's deep love for humanity and her never-ending spirit of exploration. Whether it is a carefully created person or a mud dot thrown by a vine, as the ancestor god, Nu Wa has always been satisfied with the humanity she created, full of love. In Nu Wa's eyes, the little people are intelligent and beautiful, which also reflects the Chinese nation's pursuit of equal treatment and coexistence.

In short, although "Nu Wa created humans" has less humanistic and equal ideas compared to Manchu mythology due to the influence of "heavenly teachings", its essence still deeply reflects the emphasis on equality and other ideas in national culture, which helps students establish correct ethnic confidence and a sense of universal love.

#### **4. The Ethnic and Cultural Connotation of Nu Wa's Creation of Man**

As mentioned earlier, myths not only have a profound impact on reality, but also possess extremely strong vitality. And national culture also plays a vital role in the way and direction of each nation's progress, and it plays a vital role in establishing national psychology and character. Mythology is a reflection of national mentality, through which one can experience the diversity of different ethnic groups. The broad and profound national spirit, myths are created by humans. Although they have different meanings and directions, they can help us understand the person who wrote the myths - the nation. As a mythological story created by ancient ancestors to explore their own origins, "The Creation of Man by Nu Wa" is bound to carry the cultural connotations highly respected by the Chinese nation at that time. Unlike the Western tradition of valuing martial arts, in Nu Wa, we see the Chinese national spirit of inclusiveness, love and kindness, kindness towards others, harmonious coexistence, and equal treatment. This is also one of the reasons why Chinese

culture maintains vitality and is highly respected. The national spirit is the soul of national culture and the fundamental basis for the endless growth of a nation. In today's globalized and diversified world, an important goal of mythological teaching is to re-examine ancient myths, activate, inherit, and promote national spirit.

Chinese language courses should cultivate patriotism, collectivism, socialist ideology and morality, as well as healthy aesthetic taste, develop individuality, cultivate innovative and cooperative spirit, and gradually form a positive attitude towards life and correct worldviews and values. The novel "Nu Wa Zao Ren" not only embodies the selfless spirit of dedication, the enterprising spirit of self-improvement, and the innovative spirit of exploration, but also contains a strong sense of worry and the creative spirit of striving. These are important sources to guide students to form a positive attitude towards life and a correct worldview and value system.

## 5. Conclusions

Mythology has a profound and powerful impact on reality, with a powerful Vitality. The emerging Sisyphus Bookstore was born from the myth of Sisyphus mentioned above, which gave Sisyphus another meaning: perseverance and never giving up. Star The Buck logo is the sea monster Siren in Greek mythology, also known as the modern. The reuse of myths. Not reading myths, not understanding reality Real. Myths reflect reality, and myths also inspire reality. At the same time, the story of "Nu Wa Creating People" can also strengthen a sense of national identity. Contemporary Western philosophy believes that "national identity refers to the members of a certain ethnic community identifying themselves and others as the same ethnic group, and holding a close attitude towards the material and spiritual culture of that ethnic group."<sup>[6]</sup> In the same creation myth system, people of a nation position themselves as a group when experiencing the "past", whether it is an individual or a group, defining themselves as descendants of the Chinese nation. Through the construction and interaction of the meanings of "nation" and "identity", the Chinese people have developed a sense of identity and belonging to the Chinese nation, which is centered around the myth of Nu Wa creating humans. On the basis of identity, this sense of identity and belonging is constantly elevated, which in turn enhances the national cultural confidence of the Chinese nation. Wen Rumin emphasized that it is best for Chinese language reading to be "1+X", that is, Chinese language teachers should be "the seed of reading" when doing reading. Not only should teachers attach importance to reading, but they also need to guide students to read diligently, cultivate their thinking, and improve their reading literacy. German philosopher Schelling said, "A nation is only a true nation when they agree with a common myth; a nation is only a nation when it can judge itself from its own mythology."<sup>[7]</sup> "Nu Wa Made Man" is an attempt of multi-dimensional in-depth reading, which makes teachers and students read out the beauty of myth, humanity, life and culture ... The excellent myths of all ethnic groups are the treasure house of art, and students can generate valuable wisdom by reading more and accumulating more. Teaching students to explore beauty, taste beauty and create beauty is the inherent vitality of Chinese teaching. It is also the mission of Chinese teachers to "conceive beauty with love and establish people with love" like Nu Wa. From the multi-angle and multi-directional analysis of "Nu Wa Made Man", it effectively breaks through the barrier that Nu Wa used to take the myth shell and her own image as the center, and turns to the national cultural knowledge contained in teaching, which can effectively enhance students' national cultural self-confidence and further cast the national community. This is also a kind of cultural consciousness and the cultural responsibility of Chinese education.

## References

[1] Yuan Ke, *Collation of Shan Hai Jing*. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1980, 388-389.

- [2] Liu An, *Huai Nanzi (Collection Cost of Various Scholars)*, Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore, 1986, 292.
- [3] Li Fang, *Taiping Yu Lan*, Volume 78, Shanghai Hanfenlou Photocopyed Song Edition, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1960, 364.
- [4] Yuan Ke. *Selected Interpretation of Ancient Myths*. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 1979, 21-22.
- [5] S. Swob. *Greek myths and legends*. Trans. Chu Tunan. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 1978, 113.
- [6] Melville Stewart. *Contemporary Western Religious Philosophy*, translated by Zhou Weichi, Hu Zixin and Wu Zengding. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2001, 86-93.
- [7] Xia Ruichun. *German thinkers on China*, translated by Chen Aizheng. Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 1989, 34.