The Connection between Dragon Boat Festival and Sham el-Nessim

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Abstract: According to the ancient Egyptian murals and written records, people have already celebrated Sham el-Nessim as early as 2700 BC. Similar to the Chinese dragon boat race in the Dragon Boat Festival, the ancient Egyptians made a beautifully carved sun boat on the day of Sham el-Nessim. In ancient times of Sham el-Nessim, people dyed eggs in the temple, symbolizing the resurrection of life. It is close to a game of making an egg stand at noon in Chinese Dragon Boat Festival. And on the day of Sham el-Nessim, people also paint on their faces, it is similar to draw with realgar on forehead on the Dragon Boat Festival.

The Duanwu Festival, also often known as the Dragon Boat Festival, is a traditional holiday originating in China, occurring near the summer solstice. The festival now occurs on the 5th day of the 5th month of the traditional Chinese calendar, which is the source of the festival's alternative name, the Double Fifth Festival. The Chinese calendar is lunisolar, so the date of the festival varies from year to year on the Gregorian calendar.

Qing Dynasty Dragon Boat Festival(18th century)

Unearthed in Guangxi, China, ancient Dragon Boat Racing

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Modern research suggests that the stories of Dragon Boat Festival were superimposed onto a pre-existing holiday tradition. Another theory, advanced by Wen Yiduo, is that the Dragon Boat Festival originated from dragon worship. Support is drawn from two key traditions of the festival: the tradition of dragon boat racing and *zongzi*. The food may have originally represented an offering to the dragon king, while dragon boat racing naturally reflects reverence for the dragon and the active *yang* energy associated with it. This was merged with the tradition of visiting friends and family on boats.

Similar to the use of outrigger canoes or Polynesian va'a, dragon boat racing has a rich fabric of ancient ceremonial, ritualistic and religious traditions, and thus, the modern competitive aspect is but one small part of this complex water craftsmanship. The use of dragon boats for racing and dragons are believed by scholars, sinologists, and anthropologists to have originated in southern central China more than 2500 years ago,

in Dongting Lake and along the banks of the Chang Jiang (now called the Yangtze) during the same era when the games of ancient Greece were being established at Olympia). Dragon boat racing has been practiced continuously since this period as the basis for annual water rituals and festival celebrations and for the traditional veneration of the Chinese dragon water deity. The celebration was an important part of the ancient Chinese agricultural society, celebrating the summer rice planting. Dragon boat racing was historically situated in the Chinese subcontinent's southern-central "rice bowl"; where there were rice paddies, so were there dragon boats.

Of the twelve animals which make up the traditional Chinese zodiac, only the Dragon is a mythical creature. All the rest are non-mythical animals, yet all twelve of the zodiac creatures were well known to members of ancient Chinese agrarian communities. Dragons were traditionally believed to be the rulers of water on earth: rivers, lakes, and seas; they also were thought to dominate the waters of the heavens: clouds, mists, and rains. There are earth dragons, mountain dragons, and sky or celestial dragons (Tian Long) in Chinese tradition. Mythical dragons and serpents are also found widely in many cultures around the world.

A Tang Dynasty Dragon Boat in Yangzhou Museum

Traditional dragon boat racing, in China, coincides with the *5th day of the 5th Chinese lunar month* (varying from late May to June on the modern Gregorian Calendar). The Summer Solstice occurs around 21 June and is the reason why Chinese refer to their festival as "Duan Wu" or "Duen Ng". Both the sun and the dragon are considered to be male. (The moon and the mythical phoenix are considered to be female.) The sun and the dragon are at their most potent during this time of the year, so cause for observing this through ritual celebrations such as dragon boat racing. It is also the time of farming year when rice seedlings must be transplanted in their paddy fields, for wet rice cultivation to take place. Wu or Ng refers to the sun at its highest position in the sky during the day, the meridian of 'high noon'. Duan or Duen refers to upright or directly overhead. So Duan Wu is an ancient reference to the maximum

position of the sun in the northern hemisphere, the longest day of the year or summer solstice.

A notable part of celebrating Duanwu is making and eating zongzi with family members and friends. People traditionally wrap zongzi in leaves of reed, lotus or banana forming a pyramid shape. The leaves also give a special aroma and flavor to the sticky rice and fillings. Choices of fillings vary depending on regions. Northern regions in China prefer sweet or dessert-styled zongzi, with bean paste, dates and nuts as fillings. Southern regions in China prefer savory zongzi, with a variety of fillings including marinated pork belly, sausage and salted duck eggs. The reason why the Chinese eat zongzi on this special day is because they are considered as a symbol of luck, as the pronunciation of zong is very similar to the pronunciation of zhong (中). This character has a positive connotation, used in words such as 中奖 (winning a prize). (Very close to the worshipping ceremony in Sham el-Nessim in ancient Egypt.)

Other traditional activities include a game of making an egg stand at noon (this "game" implies that if someone succeeds in making the egg stand at exactly 12:00 noon, that person will receive luck for the next year), and writing spells, it also includes drawing with realgar on forehead on the Dragon Boat Festival can ward off the vermin. The typical method is to draw the forehead, with realgar wine in pediatric forehead painting "king" word with realgar to avoid poison, and two tigers will ward off

evil. Other traditional activities also include hanging Chinese mugwort and calamus (Chinese mugwort and calamus are similar to ancient Egyptian lotus flower).

Chinese Mugwort and Calamus Combining together

All of these activities were regarded by the ancients as effective in preventing disease or evil, while promoting health and well-being.

a Game of Making an Egg Stand at Noon in Chinese Dragon Boat Festival

Drawing with Realgar on Forehead on the Dragon Boat Festival

Now let us go back to ancient Egypt .Egyptian historians believe that Sham el-Nessim is the oldest traditional festival in Egypt, dating back to 5,000 years or even earlier. According to the ancient Egyptian murals and written records, people had already celebrated the festival as early as 2700 BC. Similar to the Chinese dragon boat race in the Dragon Boat Festival, the ancient Egyptians made a beautifully carved sun boat on the day of Sham el-Nessim. People rowed on the Nile River, and the priests

and soldiers drummed and sang songs. Pharaohs, ministers, and the public admired the beauty of the nature, and the children played happily.

People Rowed on the Nile River in Sham el-Nessim

The Stamps Reflecting People Rowed in Sham el-Nessim

During the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt, festivals were closely related to the relationship between the sky, nature and real life.

According to the ancient Egyptian papyrus paintings, on the morning of Sham el-Nessim , men gave a lotus flower to their wives, symbolizing the breath of spring. In ancient times the Egyptian lotus was worshipped, especially in Egypt. It was considered a symbol of creation there. Lotus is considered a symbol of elegance and holiness. Some scholars have verified that the Nile River in Egypt was the hometown of Lotus. Long before the pyramid was built, the rich land on both sides of the Nile was covered with slim lotus. The ancient Egyptians believed that the lotus symbolized the reincarnation and resurrection. People believed that the

lotus could bring people back to life, so the flowers were also placed in the mummies. Because the petals of the lotus flower closed at night and sank into the water, the ancient Egyptians thought that the lotus contained reproductive and powerful meaning.

This flower often appeared in ancient Egyptian decorations. They believed that the lotus flower gave them strength and power; remains of the flower have been found in the burial tomb of Ramesses II. Egyptian tomb paintings from around 1500 BC provided some of the earliest physical evidence of ornamental horticulture and landscape design; they depicted lotus ponds surrounded by symmetrical rows of acacias and palms. Women often wore amulets during childbirth, which depicted Heqet as a frog, sitting in a lotus. The ancient Egyptians also extracted perfume from this flower. They also used the white lotus in funerary garlands, temple offerings and female adornment.(I think it is similar to Chinese mugwort and calamus in meaning and shape).

White lotus decorations. Frieze at a palace in Amarna

Ancient Egyptian papyrus lotus

In ancient times of Sham el-Nessim, people dyed eggs in the temple, symbolizing the resurrection of life. On the day of Sham el-Nessim, the children's favorite thing were to draw eggs with painting and then dry them in the sun. At the same time, on the day of Sham el-Nessim, people donated eggs to each other, and the ancient Egyptians would hold the

eggs together to pray for good luck and good fortune. Whose egg was not broken, it means that the sun god would satisfy his heart's wishes. In the spring after Sham el-Nessim, good luck and well-being would accompany him like a thicker green grass. It is close to a game of making an egg stand at noon in Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, right?

Eggs Dyeing in Sham el-Nessim,

And on the day of Sham el-Nessim, people also paint on their faces, don't you think it is similar to draw with realgar on forehead on the Dragon Boat Festival?

Face Painting in Sham el-Nessim, Imitating the Tiger

So at the end of the paper, I want to say, our dear readers, can't you speculate that Dragon Boat Festival is actually Sham el-Nessim in China?

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额：你知道吗？）

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