The Connection between Dragon Heads- Raising Day and the Opet Festival

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Abstract: I think the worshipping ceremony in the Opet Festival is similar to worship Dragon King in Dragon Heads-Raising Day in meaning and form,and I think the rituals of the Opet Festival 's religious celebration is also similar to perform land boat dance, dragon dance , Dragon Boat Race and yangko dance, do acrobatics in Dragon Heads-Raising Day. So from the paper, we can speculate that Dragon Heads-Raising Day is actually the Opet Festival in China.

The dragon raises its head on the second day of the second lunar month. This day is also called Longtoujie (Dragon Heads-Raising Day) or Chunlongjie (Spring Dragon's Festival).

It is said that as the day approaches, the land begins to awaken while the "Yang" air starts to rise. Dragons are auspicious omens in Chinese folk legends and they dominate wind and rain. A folk saying states that "the dragon raises its head on the second day of the second lunar month." People hope that dragons will rise to produce plentiful rain for mankind and facilitate spring plowing.

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The following are some of the traditional customs on the Dragon Heads-Raising Day.

Eating 'dragon' food

Traditionally, food eaten on this day was named after parts of the

dragon. For instance, spring pancakes were called “dragon's scales,” noodles were called “dragon's whiskers,” rice was called “dragon's son” and wontons were called “dragon's eyes.”

Eating 'dragon' food

Leading the dragon back to houses

On the day, farmers and villagers made an ash path into the houses and kitchens, then wind around the water vats from the outside. This is called leading the dragons back to houses, praying for good weather for crops.

Leading the dragon back to houses

Women not allowed to do needle-work

On this day, women were not allowed to do needle-work. It was said that when dragons raise their heads to look at the human world, needles would hurt their eyes. (I think it is similar to the custom in Egypt, after 3 to 5 pm, people are mostly avoid needles. Merchants never sell needles, people don't buy needles, even if someone is willing to pay 10 times the price to buy a needle, the owner will refuse to sell. Speaking of this taboo, it is also necessary to trace the source to an ancient myth that has been circulated among Egyptians. Legend has it that in the gods of ancient Egypt, the God of Wealth will come to the world every day from three to five in the afternoon to give wealth to the ancient Egyptians.

Ironically , the Egyptian God of Wealth is obviously " despise the poor and love the rich." When confront with the poor, he simply does not care, and a penny will not give you; instead, when he meets the rich, he will

spread out a lot of money. What is the standard of God of Wealth to judge the rich and the poor? It is a family's wearing needles and seams, if there is needles and seams , of course, the poor; if not, then is rich.

There are policies on the so-called policies, and there are countermeasures. Over time, the poor people of Egypt know the stink of the God of Wealth, and they have come up with countermeasures. That is: in the afternoon from 3 to 5, the needles are hidden. There is absolutely no sewing and threading. In this way, the God of Wealth could not tell the rich and the poor, so they had to throw money fairly.)

Women not allowed to do needle-work

Performing dragon dance and yangko dance

It is said that the dragon, which is believed to have power on the wind and rain, will appear after “Jing Zhe,” one of the 24 solar terms in Chinese, so people perform dragon dance and yangko dance on sacrificial ceremonies held on this day to pray for plentiful rain for the

busy spring plowing.

Performing dragon dance

Performing yangko dance

Performing land boat dance and doing acrobatics

The celebration is extremely bountiful in Dragon Heads-Raising Day, it also has land boat dance and acrobatics.

Performing land boat dance

Doing acrobatics

Doing acrobatics

Performing Dragon Boat Race

On the second day of the second month of the lunar calendar, commonly known as the Dragon Heads-Raising Day, the legendary day of the dragon's rise is also the time for the dragon boat race.

Performing Dragon Boat Race

Worshipping Dragon King

Dragon Heads-Raising Day is an important worshipping ritual of wishing for good harvest in the coming months. In addition to paying homage to the Dragon King, people worship the Dragon King .

Worshipping Dragon King

Worshipping Dragon King

Now let us back to Egypt, we refer to the Opet Festival as one of the most important reoccurring event of its nature during ancient Egyptian history, During ancient Egypt's New Kingdom Period, the Opet Festival, was one of the most important ceremonies, as well as one of the longest lasting events of its kind. At that time, the reigning monarch was identified with the royal ka, divine kingship was reborn and the individual king's right to rule was reconfirmed. At the climax of the festival, Amun-Re's powers were transferred to the king. Beyond its significance to kingship, the festival also secured the regeneration of the Creator, Amun of Luxor Temple, the rebirth of Amun-Re of Karnak (the Temple of Amun-Re) and the recreation of the cosmos. Not surprisingly therefore, it witnessed the personal involvement of the

pharaoh. The ancient priests of Egypt believed that in the course of the year, the gods grew weary as the agricultural cycle ran its course. They, along with the world they created, required an input of fresh energy. To do this, they needed to draw from outside the created world in order to tap the pure, uncontrolled power of the boundless chaos surrounding the cosmos, but opening that door to the uncreated was no simple matter, laden with danger. However, if the ceremony was carried out properly, it was thought to result in rebirth and recreation for both king and gods.

The Temple of Mut at Karnak

The Opet Festival apparently began on the fifteenth or nineteenth day of the second month of the first season, called Inundation. At first, it lasted only eleven days, but it was elaborately extended over time to a length of twenty-four or even twenty-seven days.

Indeed, beyond the religious significance of the event, it was a time of

gaiety. The ancient Egyptian population enjoyed the generosity of the gods during these festivals. During one Opet festival in the 12th century BC, it is recorded that temple officials distributed 11,341 loaves of bread and 385 jars of beer to the citizens (It is similar to Dragon Heads-Raising Day ,because Dragon Heads-Raising Day is also a time of gaiety in ancient Chinese Tang Dynasty, which it was said the day of "welcoming wealth". On this day, people should eat "welcome the rich fruit", that is, eat some snack foods) .

In the record at Luxor Temple, the first scenes depict the king, accompanied by the royal barque, making offerings to the barques of Amun-Re, Mut and Khonsu, the Theban triad. The barques rest on pedestals in an open court at Karnak. Afterwards, the barques of the gods and king are carried on the shoulders of priests with shaved heads. They are surrounded by bright feather plumes and fans. During the procession, the cult images are veiled. Four other priests with shaved heads, wearing leopard skin mantels, walk astride of each barque, attending to the deities needs. The gods are presented with incense and fresh water with great pomp and fanfare, while the fans and plumes are dipped in homage to the gods. Passing through a pylon, the procession moves beyond Karnak to the bank of the Nile, where the barques are loaded onto barges for transport to the Temple of Luxor.

Sety I (with a depiction of the north entrance to the colonnade hall behind him) offers to the barks of Amun, Mut, and Khons in Luxor Temple, during the Festival of Opet. From the festival scenes in the colonnade hall of Luxor Temple. Though carved under Sety I, the scenes appear to belong to an initial cartoon from the reign of Tutankhamen. Note the absence of the royal bark in the depiction of Luxor Temple, although the bark appears in the scene of the divine barks departing Luxor Temple on the return journey to Karnak.

However, in *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, Byron Shafer suggests that the events of the procession are somewhat more complex. He believes that the procession began in the Akhmenu, a Festival Hall of Tuthmosis III at the Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak with a function similar to that Luxor Temple. Shafer tells us that it is located behind the main sanctuary of Amun-Re, but was a separate cult complex where the theme of regeneration was expressed especially strongly and the barque of the divine living king probably resided. From there, he believes the king and a small party carrying the barque that housed his ka-statue moved westward into the main sanctuary of Amun-Re, where the barque sanctuary was located.

Picking up Amun-Re's barque and its priestly attendants, the king and his party exited into the open court where Karnak's two axes intersected

and turned southward onto the secondary axis. Consistent with this hypothesis, Amenhotep III depicted the Opet-festival procession on the east face (back) of his Third Pylon, where it would have faced the exiting party at the spot the axes crossed. Having turned south, the procession followed the Luxor axis through the Eighth Pylon, and made a short detour to the Khonsu Temple. There, Khonsu's ka-statue joined the parade, after the king had made offerings to him. Returning to the Luxor axis, the marchers followed the avenue of Ram-headed sphinxes to the Temple of Mut. There, Mut's ka-statue joined the procession, after the king had made offerings to her. Perhaps before the sojourn at Mut's temple, perhaps after it, the barque of Amun-Re halted at the sanctuary of the god Kamutef and also rested at Hatshepsut's northernmost way station, where the king made offerings to Amun-Re. From there the procession went on to Luxor by one of two routes, river or land.

A depiction of the barge of Queen Ankhesenamen (later usurped for Mutnodjmet) towing the riverine bark of the goddess Mut from Karnak Temple to Luxor Temple during the Festival of Opet. Soldiers assist with towing the divine bark, with accompanying Nubian dancers and military escort. Note the images of Ankhesenamen accompanying Tutankhamen in smiting scenes on the fore- and after-castles of the royal barge (she extends her own scimitar in the latter scene). From the festival scenes of Tutankhamen in the colonnade hall of Luxor Temple.

Shafer believes that the barques of the king and gods probably traveled overland from the Temple of Mut westward to the Nile landing, where they boarded their barques for Luxor, because the Luxor colonnade depicts the river scenes explicitly. Gangs of men on the banks of the Nile would tow the barques along the river while, nearby, large crowds gathered to watch the procession. Meanwhile, Egyptian and foreign elements of the army, some sporting feathers and all in full battle gear, marched behind standards adorned with brilliant plumes and streamers, would keep pace with the barques along the bank, along with similarly decorated horse drawn chariots. It must have been a grand scene, with people chanting, clapping and cheering while musicians performed and trumpets sounded. Accompanying the singing priests and priestesses are dancing foreigners: soldiers dressed as Libyans and using throwsticks as clappers, and Nubians leaping and swaying in a type of military dance with clubs. The presence of Nubians and Libyans is probably meant to evoke the groups amongst whom the solar eye goddess has recently sojourned, members of whom join her entourage for the return to Egypt. Also acrobatic dancers accompany the festival procession, the backward-leaning dance at once an evocation of the dance of the four winds and a display of eroticism.

The vanguard of the Opet-procession returning to Karnak Temple at the end of the festival. The musicians are about to enter the third pylon, with the porch of Amenhotep IV. From the festival scenes of Tutankhamen in the colonnade hall of Luxor Temple.

Dancing Nubians and military escort accompanying the Opet-procession. From the festival scenes of Tutankhamen in the colonnade hall of Luxor Temple.

As this grand procession arrived at the Luxor landing, it was met by literally throngs of princes, princesses and high officials who would then lead the procession overland, carrying bouquets and other offerings while leading fattened, festooned cattle destined for sacrifice. Finally, the procession would arrive at Luxor Temple.(I think it is similar to worship Dragon King in Dragon Heads-Raising Day in meaning and form,and I think it is also similar to perform land boat dance, dragon dance , Dragon Boat Race and yangko dance, do acrobatics).

However, Shafer is quick to point out that the procession from the Temple of Mut to Luxor sometimes followed the land route, rather than using the river. At these times, the barques of the kings and gods were carried straight through along the sphinx-lined road, resting in route at Hatshepsut's six way stations.

In fact, during the reign of Hatshepsut, evidence suggests that the land route was employed from Karnak to Luxor, but on the return

route the barques were floated down the Nile. Hence, Amun-Re, having been rejuvenated in Luxor, returned to Karnak in triumph. During the reigns of Tuthmosis III and Amenhotep III, evidence at Karnak suggests that the procession took the river route to Luxor. Then, by the time of Tutankhamun, the river route was apparently used for both legs of the procession.

Hatshepsut made offerings in the Opet Festival

The third bark shrine of Hatshepsut on the processional route between Karnak and Luxor Temples, as depicted in the Red Chapel at Karnak. The name of Hatshepsut in

the text beneath the prow of the bark of Amun has been removed, along with depictions of Osiride statues of the ruler at both ends of the shrine.

And at the end of the paper, I want to give a 3D portray during the Opet festival.

A 3D portray during the Opet festival

So at last, I want to say, dear readers, from the paper, can't you speculate that Dargon Heads –Raising Day is actually the Opet Festival in China?

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