

## 古典欧洲文化与“龙”的象征

Classical European Culture and  
the Symbol of the “Dragon”

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**Abstract:** Many Chinese perceive the dragon as a typical Chinese symbol and as a sign of blessing and well-being. For the European tradition the overall understanding of the “dragon” is in some sense exactly the opposite: the dragon is mainly a symbol of chaos, threat, even of the devil. However, a closer look on the different words that are connected with the “dragon” (leviathan, tannin, seraphim, in Hebrew; drakon, python, chimaira, basiliskos, sauros, ophis, in Greek; and drago, serpens, regulus, in Latin) can show that the symbol of the dragon-snake also carries some positive aspects, be it in the Bible, in early Christian thought, or in the context of classical Greek and Roman traditions. For example, some Biblical passages point out that the dragons of the sea must praise God like all other animals of His creation. According to other texts dragon-like figures may symbolize law and order. Especially the phoenix, which is often combined with the dragon in Chinese art and literature, is a very positive symbol in the European tradition, since this mythical bird

became a metaphor for the death and resurrection of Christ.

**Keywords:** interpretation of symbols, dragon, phoenix, Greek mythology, Hebrew Bible

曾经有许多国人热烈谈论“龙”在中国的象征意义,但似乎很少有人考察“龙”和“凤”在西方古代传统中的深层意义。虽然西方人大概不会自称“龙的传人”,但龙在古代欧洲文化中确实是一个深邃的象征,具有多层面的意义。古代晚期和中世纪的欧洲人很喜欢听关于“凤凰”的故事,也许曾经有西方人想过自己是“凤凰的传人”。

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从外观来看,“西方的龙”和“中国的龙”很相似:西方的“龙”基本上也是一条蛇,但又有别的动物(特别是两栖运动、鸟、狮子)的特征。从词根来看,西语中的 dragon(拉丁语:draco)来自希腊语的 drakon,而这个单词来自 derkomai“观看,注视”这样动词<sup>①</sup>,因为在一些记载中这样描述龙:它如果注视一个人,这个人就必死[参见希腊神话关于 Medusa(墨杜萨,蛇发女妖)的说法:谁看她,谁就必死]。当然,比希腊更古老的民族也有“龙”:Mesopotamia(美索普塔米亚)称之为 Tiamat,那些写于公元前 1400 年来自 Ugarit 的文献称之为 Yammu 和 Lothanu,小亚细亚的人称之为 Illuyanka,而在希腊有 Typhon(“百蛇为头的”提丰)和 Python(皮同)。<sup>②</sup>Python 是英文的 python(蟒蛇)一词的来源,在古希腊神话当中是一条很大的蛇,后来在 Delphi(德尔菲)被 Apollo(阿波罗神)所杀死。学习古典传统

<sup>①</sup> J. B. Hofmann, *Etymologisches Woerterbuch des Griechischen* [《古希腊语词源学词典》] (Oldenburg, Muenchen: Oldenburg Verlag, 1949), 45.

<sup>②</sup> *Lexikon fuer Theologie und Kirche* [《神学和教会百科全书》], vol. 3 (Freiburg: Herder, 2001), 144.