

Explore the Cultural Difference between Chinese and Western Zodiac

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Abstract: Choosing two similar Global human activity to indicate the relationship between different cultures on a global scale. Chinese and Western zodiac are both from natural astronomy, and then develop to the nurturant human activity. The amazing phenomenon is that they are both existance in individuals' daily life. And it becomes more and more popular to deduce the person's birth, talent and characteristics. Because of the connection between Chinese and Western zodiac, the similarities and differences among both of them have become a valuable study. The Chinese and Western were originally used for ancient calendrical calculations, and therefore the resemblances and contracts exist for cultural and traditional reasons.

1. Introduction

The Chinese and Western zodiac were originally used for ancient calendrical calculations, and therefore resemblances and contracts exist for cultural and traditional reasons. Last year, a famous film called the Chinese Zodiac acted by Jackie Chan, was shown on the international stage. Nowadays, there are various exciting stories about the Chinese and Western zodiac. In addition, individuals have always been curious about their sign or their animal according to the Chinese zodiac and this interest is rapidly growing in the West which is a fascinating phenomenon during daily life. Through Chinese and Western astrology, people can judge a person's year or month of birth, the most amazing thing is how personality may be deduced through the diverse Chinese or Western charts. Because of the connection between the Chinese and Western zodiac, the similarities and differences among both of them have become a valuable study.

Delson (2011) reported that "With a worldwide spread of Chinese culture and the effects of globalization, the twelve animals have entered the Western imagination as emblems Chinese culture and have been recognized as important elements a new global astrology, alongside the classic Western zodiac and the Maya calendar cycle." This indicates that Chinese traditional culture not only belongs to China, but also provides the worldwide common cultural research. Therefore this paper questions the relationship between different forms of astrology. The rest of paper is organized as follows. The first section explains what Chinese astrology is. The second section describes the history of the Western zodiac. The next, discusses one of the similarities, both have time cycles divided into 12 parts. Then, the differences are demonstrated. Finally, in conclusion. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between Chinese and Western astrology, the resemblances and contrasts among them as there are various similarities and differences between Chinese and Western astrology, unfortunately this paper will focus specifically on one of the respective resemblances and contrasts.

2. Methodology

2.1 Basic Content of Traditional Chinese Zodiac.

According to early Chinese texts, twelve was the quantified amount required per year for

calculation. Chinese zodiac animals are a system that relates to each year. Each is one animal and it is a twelve year cycle. It is widely used in the world, especially in the mainland China, also some Asian countries. There are twelve animals of the series--the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar. Moreover, due to the essential annual cycle, the twelve animals do not only symbolize years, but also represent months, days and twelve double-hours, there are other three series additional. These four series are constructed by traditional Chinese lunar-solar calendar. Therefore, Chinese zodiac is a complicated system of time and astrology in an ancient growing calendar from early historic period.

Primitive worship in folklore in China from thousands of years ago. The animals are the fox, weasel and urchin, this represent man's psychological reflection such as rats, snakes. Ordinary people think, these animals have special spiritual, symbolism with the will of heaven and ghosts and gods. For example, the mouse represents how human life is inextricably intertwined into myth. The rat culture makes to demotes mystery. Additional, the Chinese Proverb, says it is "the flower of wisdom" which is evidence to show that mythology is part of our psyche. Content for Chinese zodiac proverbs are numerous, widely circulated, is created by the broad masses and popular language expression form of rich flavor and taste. Thus, each animals in China have existed since ancient times and have been around for a long time of symbolic significance, which also represent people's state of mind and wisdom.

Thus Chinese astrology came into use in the Eastern Han Dynasty. It was first used by nomads and spread to the entire mainland and then to the whole world. Moreover, the twelve animals are associated with animals totems and the symbolic equivalents of the 12 Earthly Branches. The Earthly Branches--zi, chou, yin, mao, chen, si, wu, wei, shen, you, xu, hai, each of them relates to an animal. For this reason, the first branch, zi was linked to the rat, the second, chou to the ox, yin to the tiger, mao to the rabbit, chen to the dragon, si to the snake, wu to the horse, wei to the ram, shen to the monkey, you to the rooster, xu to the dog, and hai to the boar. Though with the uncertain original builded, each of animals is significant in traditional Chinese culture, it is also spread to cycle countries. The first mention of 12 animals together with Earthly Branches is proved from a third-century tomb in the north of China.

As a matter of fact, there is a popular phenomenon that more and more individuals are interested in predicting the birth and characteristics according to diverse animals. "Following tradition, those born in the year of the ox are believed to be patient, tiger, ram, and horse are deemed inappropriate for women, as there animals are especially aggressive or mobile--qualities that evidently may worry a husband." described by Delson (2011). Obviously, in traditional Chinese culture the animals are associated with diverse divination and characteristics. For example, Rats are talkative, imaginative, and full of clever ideas. An ox is patient, honest and dependable, but can be very stubborn. However, it is limited to judge a person's personality just follow the different zodiac of animals. This is just a reference.

Moreover, each animal in China has been around for a long time giving symbolic significance, representing people's need to worship animals. However, the worship of animals has become declined in the modern world. In the ancient years, people did not know anything about science and communism. Therefore, to worship the animal was an essential measure to talk to God and give hope. The animals always had special spirituality, so people through animals could transmit a pagan ideology and heal their souls through being in touch with the world around them. This a general psychology in the world. Chinese people now want to reclaim and embrace spirituality and divinity post communism. Chinese astrology as an ancient belief that it represents the psychology of Chinese individuals to associate with heaven and pray what people wish for the life. Thus, Chinese zodiac was an important system on people's psyche since thousands years ago.

2.2 Research on the Western Zodiac Based on the Historical and Cultural Background.

People can see shiny ball in the sky, that is stars. Then, stars are constituted different shape of group. That is constellation. It is help people to locate the dissimilar stars in the night sky. People can see a constellation depending on diverse time of year. Further to this, Ghislaine (1981) claimed

that “The band of sky each side of the ecliptic, called the zodiac, is divided into 12 equal sections. Most of the 12 sections (or “signs”) of the zodiac were given their names more than 3000 years ago.” The international Astronomical Union divided the sky into 88 constellations which make each star belong to a specific constellation.

In fact, seen from earth, the sun moves gradually in the Celestial Sphere and passes through constellations and shapes a circle for a year. The circle is called Ecliptic. It is separated to 12 equal parts, and each of part was named to close constellation. The twelve Western zodiac are Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces. Additional, nowadays, some astronomer reported that there is the thirteenth sign because of the moving of axis of the earth through 3000 years. The thirteenth sign is Ophiuchus.

Similar to the Chinese zodiac, individuals always deduce a person’s month of birth and trust that dissimilar signs present diverse characteristics and aptitude. For instance, “Aries date of Birth: March 21 -April 19, Strength: hopeful, energetic, versatile, adventurous, argumentative, weakness: impulsive, naive, self-willed.” (Travel China Guide.com, 1998-2013). Individuals can not make any judgment before really know a person, or through these like divination and prognostication thing.

There is a relationship between astronomical phenomena and events in astrological belief in society. Astrology has several powers that science can not explain. For knowledge of the universe and also the spirit of the world. However, several scientific tests of astrology can not support any evidence to prove that the astrology is rational and has any evidence it is scientific, so it is regarded as pseudoscience. In spite of there is no scientific fact for their belief, the astronomical phenomena also exists in modern society. This is a psychological effect in people’s mind. Researched by Jung (2013) it is believed that “Our Soul speaks to us in this language of images through dreams and through archetypal symbols. Astrological planets are archetypal symbols, and our birth charts are a unique ‘map of our Soul’ that can illuminate the relationship between our conscious and unconscious mind.” It is believable that the conscious and unconscious will through dream and planetary to define the patterns of behaviour in people’s lives and destiny. Moreover, it will through a kind of psychological analysis. “I formed the opinion that astrology is of particular interest to the psychologist, since it contains a sort of psychological experience which we call 'projected' - this means that we find the psychological facts as it were in the constellations.” reported by Jung. Jung is a researcher who is interested in the connection between astrology and people’s psychology, and get various evidence to show the ancient people made original astrology as a kind of psychological representative.

2.3 The Similarities between Chinese Zodiac and the Sign of Zodiac.

The Chinese zodiac indicates several similarities to the sign of zodiac (Western zodiac). The most obviously are both of them divided into twelve parts, majority of signs named by animal, and each labels with the culture related to individual’s personality and relationships.

Insofar as the introduction of Chinese zodiac and Western zodiac, there is a consensus in astrology that time cycle separate to 12 parts. The Chinese zodiac was proved refer to the Earthly Branches, thus it was divided into 12 portions. Moreover, Delson (2011) describes that “According to early Chinese texts such as the Zuo zhuan and Zhouli, twelve was considered the number of heaven, the perfect measure for calendrical calculations.” There is the remarkably consistent that the Western astronomy also divided time into twelve portions.

Each signs at least majority of those with the names of animals. In Chinese zodiac, all of them are animals. Rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar. Not all of Western zodiac, but largely of them are named by animals. Such as Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn and Pisces.

The most interesting amazing and common thing is both of them are associated to individual’s talent, characteristics and relationships. For example, they are always used to constellation matching, “LIBRA and ARIES: Shooting stars in the bedroom. Tension, however, at a mental level. It can work if you are both willing to compromise.” (tingclass.net, 2012) Additionally in Chinese zodiac system, different animals matching diverse animal make diverse moral. For example,

through traditional Chinese culture that Rat and Ox relate to wisdom and hardworking; Tiger and Rabbit relate to valiancy and careful. These are several obviously similarities between Chinese zodiac and Western astrology.

2.4 The Several Dissimilar between Western and Chinese Astronomy.

On the contrary, Western and Chinese traditional astronomy, dissimilar on several significant views. “The former was primarily based on the ecliptic (the path of the sun in the sky), whereas the latter was equatorial and polar. In the Chinese system, the location of the sun on the celestial equator was deduced by opposition, by observing the monthly position of the full moon in the relation to the circumpolar stars, which were linked to the equator by a system of meridians.” characterized by Delson (2011). Hence, the Chinese and Western zodiacs have completely diverse time calendrical calculation systems. In spite of the several resemblances on the surface, the essence is diverse absolutely. The Chinese twelve cycle is associated to years rather than month; all of Chinese zodiac are represented to twelve animals, whereas some of Western zodiac are not related to animals; further, the Chinese zodiac animals are not corresponded to constellation or ecliptic.

Because Chinese zodiac animals relate to years rather than month, the year is the symbolize details relate to the individual’s family society or communication with their grandparents. The individual's age can also be clearly derived from the animals of the Chinese zodiac, the current sign of the year and the individual's identified age. For instance, a person who is a horse is either 12, 24, or 36 years old in 2012, the year of the Horse. In 2010, the year of the monkey, that person is two years younger.

As for animals of Chinese zodiac are not associated to constellation or ecliptic, because the evidence “The 12 animals are also linked to traditional Chinese agricultural calendar, which runs alongside the better known lunar calendar. Instead of months, this calendar is divided into 24 two week segments known as *Solar Terms*. Each animal is linked to two of these solar terms for a period similar to the Western month. Unlike the 60 year lunar calendar, which can vary by as much as a month in relation to the Western calendar, the agricultural calendar varies by only one day, beginning on the Western February 3 or 4 every year”(Wikipedia. org, 2013). Since 3000 years ago, Han dynasty, the twelve animals are corresponded to the Earthly Branches, therefore, the animals of Chinese zodiac are established by the base of Earthly Branch instead of constellation or ecliptic.

The origin for constellation is that various names of the constellations from ancient Greeks, and it is easier to locate diverse stars in the sky through dividing stars as groups. Further to this, in the sky each side of ecliptic, called the zodiac, is separated to twelve equal portion. And they are named by animal, object and human being more than 3000 years ago.

Therefore, people’s lives aim and soul target is to heal oneself, so astrology as a ancient and believable belief to knowing people as a deep aspect. People’s lives need hope and rescued hands from God. Astrology might the direct measure to the connection to God in people’s mind. Whether Chinese zodiac or Western zodiac, they all represent the psychology of people who for wish happiness and love, it allows them to confront struggle and pain. Thus, Chinese and Western astrology still exists and as an essential role is accepted by contemporary society.

3. Conclusion

Consequently, Chinese and Western zodiac were originally used for ancient calendrical calculations and study of astronomy, and therefore similarities and dissimilars exist for cultural and traditional reasons. Nowadays, interest in Chinese and Western zodiac make them become an interesting and valuable study. Due to ancient astronomy and original psychological phenomenon, the worship of astronomy deeply embedded in the human condition. Most individuals through Chinese or Western zodiac want hope, contact with God, also the analysis of the metaphor behind human behaviour and to predict the talent, characteristics, and compatible relationships. This is a current phenomenon in the world and the most exciting point is that is not just a ridiculous superstition. Accordingly, it is necessary to research the origin and develop our further

understanding of Chinese and Western astrology.

Through the research, the increasing knowledge of Chinese and Western zodiac is the significant bases to understand and analysis the inside connection between both of them. There are several similarities and contradictions exist. The most obviously are both of them divided into twelve parts, majority of signs named by animal, and each labels with the culture related to individual's personality and relationships. On the contrary, Western and Chinese traditional astronomy, dissimilar on several cardinal views. The Chinese twelve cycle is associated to years rather than month; all of Chinese zodiac are represented to animals, whereas some of Western zodiac are related to human being and object; further, the Chinese zodiac animals are not corresponded to constellation or ecliptic.

Most people in our modern life have forgotten the Chinese and Western zodiac's source and complicated meaning, individuals just divination according to them. And now, they as the topic when people are in leisure time instead of the astrology worship and psychology hint. Several of the prediction can be exactly, but not all of them. They are ancient sciences, not all that can't afford not to believe. The ancient calendrical calculation and astronomy are remarkable, they are worthy to be researched. With regard to judge person's personality and moral quality, there is a believable main idea from the novel 'Pride and Prejudice' by Jane Austen is that Not to rush to make any judgments before you really know a person, or it will hurt a truly lovable person.

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