

Nuwa——A Goddess in Chinese Mythology

Nuwa, also known as the Queen of Wa, is one clanlord in ancient times, gradually be regarded as the ancestor of human beings in Chinese mythology. According to the mythology records, Nuwa has a human-like face but snake-like body. She is Fuxi's sister, and in the meanwhile, also his wife. To create human with clay and to repair the leaking sky with color stone are thought to be her main contributions. Besides, Nuwa is also admired as the inventor of Shenghuang (a kind of reed pipe instrument) and gauge, and the creator of marriage. Later ages, Nuwa is looked upon as deity in the folk belief, regarded as the Human ancestor and the Goddess of marriage.



Name Origin

Nuwa organized an ancient clan. One explanation in <说文解字> (one book written in ancient Chinese which interpretation Chinese characters) says that, the Chinese words '媧' contains the meaning of 'nourish'.

Blood Lineage

Nuwa and Fuxi's mother is Huaxu, all these three are Human ancestors in folk believes. Many ancient books mentioned that Fuxi was born from the footprint which Huaxu left in Leize (the old name of one continent). Nevertheless, no agreed records on Nuwa's origin has been found. And this place is believed to be somewhere near an little town in Shaanxi Province. There are still tourist spots named Huaxu Gully, Nuwa Valley and Refined Stone Stage in this town, seen as the relics from ancient times.

The union between Nuwa and Fuxi is the origin of marriage. So Nuwa is Fuxi's wife, and also his sister. Both Nuwa and Fuxi were the "Wind" surname, indicates that they share the same maternal ancestors. As the forbears of human beings, Nuwa and Fuxi organized the earliest tribes. After being ruled by Fuxi for several generations, Nuwa clan took over the power and became leader of the surname alliance.

Human Creation

As the human ancestor in Chinese mythology, Nuwa created human beings with loess.

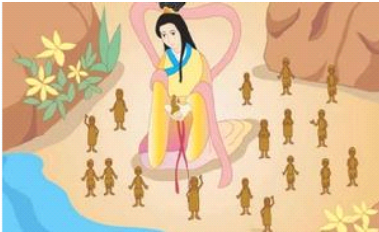
One day, the goddess Nuwa walking on the vast fields, looking around. She saw ridges of mountains going up down, rivers running towards remote area, trees and grass flourishing, birds singing in the sky, beasts galloping on the grassland. It was undoubtedly a wonderful, beautiful landscape.

The goddess Nuwa, however, felt an indescribable loneliness. She cannot tell herself why all these beauties bother her so much.

She told her anxiety to the trees and grass, they responded her with no answer; She cried to all the fishes, birds and beasts, they also kept in silence. She sat near the pond languidly, watching

her own shadow in the clear water, absently. Suddenly, one leaf drifted down to the water and made the water and her reflection ripple gently. The idea flashed into her mind: the reason why I feel so lonely and vapid is because there's no creature like me!

At this point, she picked up some loess immediately, and shaped the loess into the figure which reflected from the water, which means, she made copies of her reflection.



All these little loess men had hands and legs, eyes and noses. They were copies of Nuwa, copies of this goddess. Thus their characteristics were quite different from other animals or creatures. When put onto the ground, all these little men began to run and dance happily. They talked to each other in the way Nuwa did. They came into lives! Nuwa was so excited

by this view, and she continually made more loess human. She also gave them a name-- '人' (Chinese word for human).

According to folklore, this was the beginning of humankind.

Nuwa was so inspired and excited by this lively scene. So she made more clay figurines according to her own appearance. The revelers let her feel warm inside. She made clay figurines day and night, and finally, after a long time of doing this, she got tired. Then she conveniently drew a cane, dipped it into mud and kept slapping the cane on the ground. Mud splashed on the ground. And all this spot became live human, immediately. Interestingly, it is believed that all the clay figurines made by Nuwa's hands became the noblemen in human society. However those who were the descendants of the mud-splashed-men became the lower class, ruled by the hand-made men.

Creation of Marriage

After the creation of human-being, Nuwa began to travel around the beautiful continent again. During her journey, she happened to find some little clay men lying besides the road, out of breathe and cannot be as vibrant as they were initially 'produced'. At this sight, Nuwa realized that these normal creatures' lives have limitation. They cannot stay alive forever and be immortal like her. So the idea came up to her mind: these little things should have the capability to reproduce themselves. And this was the reason why Nuwa brought in the concept of "marriage". With the birth of 'marriage', human can 'produce' human by the combination of one male and one female. And thus Nuwa can be freed from the tiring task—making human.

Mythology Decipher

How this story emerged in Chinese folklore?

In prehistorical China, people lived in Fenyin (one place in Shanxi) organized many tribes. All these tribes were under the control of female members, as the so called 'Matriarchal clan society'. In these female-ruled society, members of the tribes "know their mothers, but not their fathers" (只知其母, 不知其父).

How can this happen?

In matriarchal clans, female members have authorities over males and enjoy male-members' admiration. Girls receive special love and care from their mothers and aunts. They were told that they are the descendants of Nuwa, and therefore are half-goddess. So the sex-related matters are kept secrets till adulthood. And when they grow up, their mothers will lead them to attend the temple festivals, guided them to date and coitus with males from other tribes, and of course, secretly at night. This process is beautifully called 'spring hunt' or 'seed collection'. In Fenjin, temple festivals were held on the shoal between Yellow River and Fen River. The shoal is formed by the sand and mud, which are carried and deposit by water. In order to preserve the holiness and purity of their figures, females told the male members of their own tribe that the new-born baby were clay-made, which had been done on the shoal, which had nothing to do with sex, like Nuwa did before. When day of farrowing comes new, pregnancies go to remote forests to give birth to their babies, with the help of their female family members. Thus, the secret can be kept forever.

This one hypothesis explains how Nuwa emerged in fairytale. Though some details sounds unreasonable, it's still a good story to inspired the bright side of human beings.

And Matriarchal clan society still remains in parts of remote China, like Naxi people habitate in Yunnan.

