

# The Duke of Zhou from the perspective of psychological dynamics: the symbolic significance of the snake and the interweaving of Chinese culture

Qimin Yun<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Macau University of Science and Technology*

\*Corresponding author: Qimin Yun

## Abstract

The paper investigates that potential dimension of it in the realm of psychology and the value of it in ancient Chinese culture. Important factor of the cultural heritage of ancient China, it shows systematic interpretation of dreams and reflects the old understanding of destiny, cosmic order. Thus, this work has profoundly affected feelings in the folk culture and has become a reference for decision making decisions in daily life. On the other hand, in contrast to the dreams study in western psychology, the analysis of it shows universality in human exploration of the meaning of dreams and suggests its potential value in the area of psychology. A very broad cross-cultural psychological perspective gives a finer point of understanding to this book while also adding an insight into the common human psychological characteristics and subconscious patterns. The whole paper essentially draws the attention of a Viewer towards how valuable the Zhou Gong Jie Meng has been as a psychological contribution and how deeply it is interlinked in ancient Chinese culture.



Full Text Article



Copyright (c) 2024 The author retains copyright and grants the journal the right of first publication. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

**Keywords :** Snake; dream; subconscious; psychology

## Foreword

Psychological dynamics, or Psychodynamics<sup>1</sup>, is a psychological method of exploring human behavior in terms of psychological influences. This method allows for the examination not just of the behaviors, feelings, and emotions, but their interrelationships and with early experiences. With

<sup>1</sup> Psychodynamics: It is a psychological faction founded by Freud, which emphasizes the influence of subconscious power on individual behavior and psychological processes, as well as the exploration and understanding of the deep structure of human psychology.

regard to consciousness, motivation, and subconscious mind, psychological dynamics is mainly concerned with the process. Psychodynamics theory forms an important ideological basis in social work, emphasizing that emotionality and internal conflict were crucial in the course of generating and solving problems. It provided resourceful ideological materials for valuable theoretical support to practice work. Psychodynamics represents the aspect of social work which is social cohesion, where people are encouraged to adapt and integrate into orderly, surrounding societies. Psychodynamics is a psychological faction, which was founded by Freud, emphasizing the power of subconscious activity on individual behavior and psychological processes, as well as examining and understanding the deep structure of human psychology.

When you contrast old knowledge and the modern science of psychology, you get the Duke of Zhou<sup>2</sup> on Dreams, which is something more than just an antique piece of writing. This ancient literature is a treasure-trove of Chinese culture and is also one of the earliest documents of dream interpretation. Through psychological dynamics, Dream of Zhou's symbols could then be used to understand deeply the dreams that form part of the ancient man's psychological life, apart from reflecting their inner world and subconscious mind. It's more on the psychological dynamics-particularly that of Freud and Jung- which interprets dreams as an avenue of subconscious communication in symbols that relates to deep human desires, fears, and conflict. It's found that, while the symbols of The Dream of Zhou are distinctly drawn from the ancient background of culture in China, their psychological values agree with the modern psychodynamic theory so as to teach us a new angle of time- and space-based dream interpretations. Through this analytic method, both with reference to cultures and time periods, we would be able to not only understand Zhou Gong more deeply but also get a glimpse into common human psychologies and subconscious patterns. The Duke of Zhou: One is that of the ancient Chinese classics, one is the literature on dream interpretation and psychological thought, and in fact what is viewed as an important work in ancient studies of Chinese dreams, one is the fragment from the Chinese classical literature.

### **The deep connection between the Zhou gongs dream and Chinese culture**

The most important ancient cultural legacy of China is the Duke of Zhou. It's because it defines systematic interpretations of dreaming by all groups of people from China. It reflects also the fate ancient beings saw and cosmic order to which he belonged. This work penetrates folk culture and even becomes reference in making choices in life. In some sense, dream analyses resemble the works on dreams in the western psyche, especially with regard to the discussions on the relationship between the dream and subconscious mind, which could be regarded as early embodiments of the psychology concept of eastern culture even though this was developed earlier than modern psychology's systematic pattern. Such an approach can show, from a cross-cultural psychological point of view, the universal element in the quest of mankind for purpose in dream realization, and perhaps even in its value for psychology of a general nature.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Zhou: is one of the ancient Chinese classics, is a literature on dream interpretation and psychological thought, is regarded as an important work in the study of ancient Chinese dreams.

According to traditional Chinese culture, dreams are considered a deep symbol related to philosophy, religion, and folk customs. Dreams are a bridge between humans and the universe, whether reflecting the harmony or disharmony between them. Following the Yin-Yang theory and the five elements, dream phenomena are the result of interaction between the individual's internal system with outside environments. Psychologically, dreams are viewed as manifestations of an individual's subconscious desires and fears. Works like *The Duke of Zhou* would provide rich symbolic meanings that reflect ancient observations of daily life and social structure. In Taoism and Buddhism, dreams are often treated as the vague expressions by which the reality was shown as a line into illusion. From literature to art, dreams bring ideals and emotions towards exploring the mysteries of human beings and the universe. Overall, the view of dreams is from a cultural perspective like dreams are neither mere direct interpretation of dreams nor do they merely serve as an outcome but express an entire understanding of life, universe, and the soul also an expression of the deep understanding of life, the universe and the soul.

### **The basic principles of psychodynamic dream interpretation and the interpretation of symbolism**

The so-called study of dreams in psychology commences with the much pioneering work made by Sigmund Freud. In his book published in 1900, "The interpretation of Dreams,"<sup>3</sup> he sees dreams as the way of fulfilling deep human desires. The focus is mainly on sexual hunger. This theory of dreams was used in therapy for neurosis. Understanding Freud's psychopathological concepts on neurosis is more than understanding this theory. He explained how a number of psychological symptoms were the effects of suppressing sexual desires. Some people will act like children and exhibit behaviors resembling children when they are not more comfortable letting off such sexual impulses. Examples of sexual abnormalities that develop in adults and look like child behavior are voyeurism and exhibitionism. For example, sometimes children look at the private parts of other people or exhibit their private parts when other people are around, which is for enjoyment. Freud believed that much of abnormal sexual behavior is actually the external expression of a sexual maturation process that had originally begun in early childhood.

Carl Jung was the most important disciple of Sigmund Freud and started to dispute the principles of developmental psychology. Unlike Freud, who believed that dreams manifest a suppressed sexual desire, Jung offered another interpretation: he thought of dreams as manifestations of one's unconscious wisdom. Whereas Freud saw the unconscious as a storehouse of wants, he saw it as an insight resource. Indeed, wisdom in the unconscious surpasses even that of the conscious. He further argued that in sleep, the repression that takes place during daily life is temporarily withdrawn during which these hidden treasures in the heart can emerge.

Erich Fromm examined the works of Freud and Jung regarding dream theory, independently formulating his departure. He suggested that dreams are nothing but ways of revealing human nature, very meaningful and critical expressions of our mental activities during sleep. In this theoretical system, dreams have the capacity to reveal desires once considered "reasonable" or

---

<sup>3</sup> The Analysis of Dreams: It is a work of Freud, which proposes that dreams are the expression of subconscious desire, and reveals the deep meaning of individual psychology by analyzing the symbols in dreams.

"unreasonable", and at the same time indicate an integration of reason and wisdom. Fromm's principle system strongly analyses the interweaving of love with reason, desire with morality, evil, and good in a dream. The theory builds itself upon the social subconscious mind, adopting Freud's understanding of the theory of the subconscious mind and extending and deepening it. In this connection, he opposes the interpretation of the subconscious content as sex and the idea that repression is only that of sex. Man thus declares that dreams are not only manifestations of sexual satisfaction. At the same time, Fromm agrees with the wide understanding of the subconscious as that of Jung. The subconscious intelligence may transcend the human level of consciousness; however, Fromm does not accept the opinion of Jung on dream interpretation which is generally considered as an expression of the collective subconscious, either a reflection of ancestral wisdom, or a genetic consequence of ethnic experience. He also thinks that our subconscious wisdom is in truth, derived from our very reality-Living Environment along with a social and cultural environment. Hence, our dreams may reflect a deep comprehension of the personal reality containing a true understanding of the social culture. In waking states, these insights are often masked by hallucinations and lies.

## **The symbolism of the snake**

### ***1. Symbolism of snakes in different cultures and psychodynamics***

The symbolism of snakes is rich and complex. The ranges of interpretations are immensely varied in cultures and psychodynamics. For example, in the Egyptian culture, snakes were symbols of life and health. This meaning went deep into the essences of life and revivification. Snakes occur in most of the arts and hieroglyphs as coiling around a staff-like symbol of the god Asclepius, that personifies healing and medicine. However, in the Chinese cultural fabric, the snake has something to do with wisdom and spirituality as it intimates the very deep connection between the earthly and the heavenly domains. The snake is an animal in the Chinese calendar, believed to endow its signs with intelligence and insight. In Christian culture, on the contrary, snakes are sometimes regarded as conditions of temptation or evil. Accordingly, this representation has very strong roots in the biblical stories like Adam and Eve, where the serpent is known as a deceiver and, perhaps metaphysically, the downfall of humanity.

From a psychological viewpoint, the meanings that hold for this serpentine symbolism emerge as equally striking and varied. According to Sigmund Freud, the founding father of psychoanalytics, the snake represents sexual conflict and anxiety rather than human sexuality itself, which is complex and sometimes tumultuous in nature. He believed the snake's phallic shape and the fear of it acts as repression of sexual desires and subconscious conflicts. Whereas, the snake for Carl Jung's analytical school was a sign of the self's potency, wisdom, transformation, and regeneration. This suggested that it had, by and large, that power inherent in individuals to renew themselves: a wisdom from internal experience. The snake's shedding, and coming out again, were meant to symbolize the potential for human growth and development. Such meanings, and even more, have a number of signs and interpretations that reflect the stark actuality of snakes in human psychology and culture. They make salient how a single creature can be viewed in substantially different terms, being signified in both positive and negative aspects of human experiences. For that matter, the snake becomes a powerful symbol of the intricacies of life, the dual nature of human beings, and the

unending dance of good and evil. It can mean the life force and potential destruction, and also be a custodian of hidden knowledge as well as a harbinger of danger. Hence, the snake keeps enticing and teasing, challenging us to face the darker part of our psyches while offering hope for purity and enlightenment.

## ***2. Snake similarities and differences in Chinese culture and psychodynamics***

The subject of snakes brings about fascinations and interpretations that have proved unique among Chinese culture and psychodynamic perspectives. In many perspectives, snakes are seen broadmindedly as being very similar to their psychological constructs in aspects like wisdom and spirituality. They closely relate to ideas about metamorphosis and rebirth, which express ingrained faith in the ability of snakes to shed off old skins and become fresh and shiny creatures.

However, to deviate from cultural context, one will touch on what people near the pain and loss tend to say about snakes: in Chinese culture, snakes progenitive-ally interlace themselves into given legends and mythologies. They can be taken as meanings of loyalty and love. The White Snake is a legend that takes on a snake spirit uniquely falling in love with a human: which shows the capacity of a snake to much love and loyalty with depth of emotion.

It is believed by those involved in psychodynamics and bearing qualities of snake in the light of Carl Jung's ideas, snake acquires a significant connotation regarding being an archetypal symbol of collective unconscious. Jung's collective unconscious theory indicates that some forms and motifs are instilled and shared worldwide in human cultures. Thus, the snake stands as one of those archetypes strongly representing instinctual, sometimes shadowy, parts of the human psyche.

Yet another point of insight is that serpents in Chinese culture are usually devoid of their many connotations in the West as negative creatures through which the mind relates to the reality of things. Many narratives in Western discourse depict snakes as harbingers of fear, evil, temptation, and sin; for example, in the biblical story of Adam and Eve, the snake served to tempt Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. This contrast illuminates the extreme differences through which a common symbol can be completely understood under many cultural and psychological spectacles.

Similarities and differences of cultural and psychological interpretations of the snake include much more reality in the multi-dimensional, cross-cultural nature of the snake as a symbol. The snake represents a kind of creature replete with complex meanings, mirroring this plural pane through which humanity interprets and relates to the naturalistic aspects of the outside world with deeper insights into their psyches.

## **Image analysis of the snake in his dream**

### ***1. Zhou Gong explained the case of snake dream in his dream***

In the ancient book "The Duke of Zhou", the interpretation of dreams is quite profound and symbolic. For example, " the dream of a dragon or snake entering the house is often seen as an auspicious sign of impending wealth; while the dragon and snake joining the stove is a sign of prosperity and promotion. The scene of the snake changing into a dragon implies that there will be noble people and the support of important people. For women, dreaming of the dragon symbolizes the birth of a prominent or accomplished child. Conversely, the presence of a dragon or snake in a



killing scene is often ominous, indicating the potential for a major disaster or misfortune. And the dream of the snake bite himself, an unexpected symbol of the imminent great wealth. If the snake enters the embrace in the dream, it indicates the birth of a noble or accomplished offspring. The sight of snakes swimming in the water usually symbolizes an imminent job promotion or an increased reputation. The dream that a snake follows someone away may indicate infidelity in a marriage. The dream of a snake entering the valley may signal the prospect of gossip or arguments. The dream of a snake wrapped around its body also indicates the birth of a noble or distinguished offspring. Large numbers of snakes appear in dreams and may be associated with underworld or supernatural events. While dreaming of red and black snakes, usually an auspicious omen of rhetoric controversy; yellow and white snakes may mean willA legal or legal issues.

## ***2. Psychological dynamic interpretation***

In the field of psychodynamics, especially under the theoretical framework of Freud and Jung, the symbols in dreams often reflect the deep thinking, desires and conflicts of the subconscious mind. As a symbol of power, the snake is often interpreted in psychoanalysis as representatives of sexual desire, creativity, or the fundamental power of life. For example, Freud may associate the dream snake to sexual desire or potential instinctive repression, while Jung may look at the snake as the symbolism of wisdom, healing, and change. Psychological dynamics holds that dreams are a form of expression of the subconscious content. Under this understanding, the appearance of snakes in dreams may symbolize an unresolved conflict within the dreamer or an underlying capacity not yet fully realized. For example, the image of snakes in dreams may reveal dreamers fear of certain problems in life, or a sense of confusion about gender roles. In interpreting a dream, the dreamers emotional response to the dream event is also critical. If a dreamer feels fear of a snake in his dream, it may reflect fear or rejection of certain aspects of the subconscious mind; if attracted or comfortable, it may mean acceptance of internal conflict or desire. Psychological dynamics also emphasizes that the cultural background of the individual should not be ignored when interpreting dreams. The symbolic meaning of snakes may be quite different in different cultures. In some culturesInside, snakes may symbolize evil and temptation, while in other cultures, they may represent wisdom and healing. In conclusion, from a psychodynamic perspective, the dream of snakes may reveal deep psychological conflict, underlying desires, fear, or processes of personal spiritual growth. This interpretation depends not only on the content of the dream itself, but also on the shadow of the dreamers personal experience, emotional state and cultural background.

## **Conclusion**

In general, one can both summarize and elaborate on dream interpretation from the psychodynamic view set forth by Zhou Gong, as being able to ponder the meaning of dreams given this psychological existence attributed in the ancient times makes it all the more interesting because the significance underscores how dreams bring reflective moments of our innermost psyche and subconscious. In Chinese culture, dreams are rich and diverse symbols embodying philosophy, religion, and folk. Dream symbolism is central to psychodynamic theory because dreams would reveal deep-seated human desires, fears, and internal conflicts. Importantly, The Duke of Zhou's

teachings are an ancient Chinese cultural heritage that demonstrates the systematic Chinese technique of interpreting dreams: they represent, as well, the understanding of the ancient people about destiny and the cosmic order. From a cross-cultural psychological perspective, the dream interpretation idea would emphasize the similarity within humanity's struggle to make sense of dreams. It, therefore, pinpoints the probable significance and worth dream analysis would carry in psychology. This psychodynamic interpretation of dreams, as Zhu or Duke Zhou would teach, serves as a lot more than just a cut of the ancient Chinese psyche. This also brings out a vital truth in a universal human perspective—it emphasizes such an important function of dreams as a medium for understanding the subconscious mind and the inner workings of conflict within individuals. It no longer remains a mere artifact of history, but an enduring testament to the relevance of inquiry in psychology both in cultures and ages. Hence, through the interpretation of symbolism and the psychological dynamics embedded in dreams, we begin to know more about the human condition and the quest for self. This pursuit of dreams as a portrayal of our inner world still provides a wealth of knowledge on the human mind and remains one of the active research fronts in psychology itself. In the future, we must keep embracing and further developing these ancient wisdoms by integrating contemporary theory into its folds to enrich our understanding of the human mind and spirit.

### Reference:

- [1] Payne, Malcolm. CHAPTER 4 Psychodynamic relational practice. *Modern social work theory* Fifth edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 2020. ISBN 978-1-352-01108-1.
- [2] Docketeray, F. C. (1942). *Psychology* / Floyd Carlton Docketeray. Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- [3] Lin Biying. (2009). Mapping of cultural differences in animal metaphors. *Teaching and Management (Middle-school Edition)*, 1,8687. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1004-5872-C.2009.01.040>
- [4] Luo Changpei. (2004). *Language and Culture* / Luo Changpei. Beijing Press.
- [5] Lu Juan. (2010). *The study of snake images in the Bible*. Huazhong Normal University.
- [6] Wang Yin. (2020). *Recognition of linguistics: a localized study of cognitive linguistics* / written by Wang Yin. (The 1st edition. ). The Commercial Press.
- [7] Geng Zhanchun. (2020). Psychoanalytic Introduction. *Literary Education (top)*, 1,17-.
- [8] Ji Mingxia and Liu Hui. (2006). Fromms social character theory analysis. *Journal of Qiqihar University (Philosophy and Social Sciences edition)*, 2,3840. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1008-2638.2006.02.013>
- [9] Tian Yu. (2017). A literary interpretation of the Bible. *Electronic magazine of the New Education Era (Teacher edition)*, 9,253-.
- [10] Feng Yuying. (2007). Comparison of the cultural connotation of animal nouns in English and Chinese culture — — Comparison of English and Chinese animal words. *Journal of Suzhou College of Education*, 10 (3), 8284. <https://doi.org/10.3969/j.issn.1009-8534.2007.03.052>