

An Analysis of the Origin of "Phoenix Man" - Also on the Semantic Transmutation of "Phoenix"

Jinqin Liu

School of Liberal Arts, Yangtze University, Hubei 434023, China

Abstract

The network buzzword "phoenix man" was created by the word formation of the affiliated sememe and the core sememe. From the diachronic perspective, when phoenix had a change from the deification to the personification, its gender has changed from the male, hermaphrodite to female, its social status has gradually changed from aristocracy to civilian. The important reason for the evolution of semantic was that the dragon was largely used as a symbol of royalty.

Keywords

Phoenix, semantic transmutation, affiliated sememe, core sememe.

1. Introduction

In recent years, "phoenix man" became overwhelmingly the popular words on the network, and derived a lot of extended usages, such as "phoenix elite man", "crystal phoenix elite man", "the best phoenix" and so on. As for its meaning, the vast number of Internet users thought that it stood for man who came from country. It had a kind of derogatory meaning with discrimination against rural people.

According to interpretation of Baidu, "phoenix man" was traced directly from the saying "a gold phoenix fled out the ravine", referred to a man who was born and grew up in poor family (especially born in rural area), but thanks to his efforts, he graduated from university and was able to move to a big city and became successful finally. The cruelty and hardships of life gave him the spirit of hard work, at the same time branded him with a narrow sense of inferiority. When he married city girl, he often encountered problems resulting from their different culture backgrounds and habits. Recently many TV dramas reflected the theme, such as "New Age of Marriage", "Double Sided Adhesive Tape", "Wang Gui and Anna" and so on. The author researched "phoenix man" in Baidu, there are more than two million webpages about it. It could be seen that the "phoenix man" was often in the opposite position with the "peacock female", "urban woman", "bourgeoisie girl" and "Shanghai woman", highlighting the humble social state and the tradition of personality. From the view of modern women, "phoenix man" was not only a humble rural man's pronoun, but also usually was used to describe a person with a narrow, stingy, wretched and other character defects. It was full of strong derogatory colors.

How did the word "phoenix man" produce? Phoenix in the minds of people has always been a symbol of women and noble, but about "phoenix man", why were there different genders and emotional variations? The author discussed "phoenix man" from the diachronic and synchronic angles to find out its root.

From the synchronic perspective, phoenix was regarded as a symbol of noble women. People commonly used "hope children become dragon", or "hope children become phoenix" to express a good prayer for their children. At the same time, people often used proverb "golden phoenix was flown of the mountains" to describe the rural girl who was born in countryside worked hard to change the fate. The meaning of the word was closely related to the meaning of the format, and if the word usually was used, the word may be contaminated with the meaning of the format. In modern Chinese, because this proverb was used frequently, almost everyone was familiar with it, so that "phoenix" had the overall meaning of the saying. In this way, the word "phoenix" had subsidiary meaning of humble

parentage female. Because of long-term social and cultural psychology, Phoenix had female subsidiary meaning. About this issue, the author would discuss specifically in the following paper. According to this phrase "golden phoenix was flown of the mountains", phoenix had meaning of the humble origin, especially it was related with the ravine, even if there wasn't this context, its subsidiary meaning would still exist, so people often used phoenix to express the same meaning. How do we express it for those men with same experience?

When people created a new word, only selected subsidiary meaning of the "phoenix", then added the core sememe "man" to constitute "phoenix man". In other words, "phoenix man" used a kind of word formation that subsidiary sememe "phoenix" added the core sememe "man". And under the influence of the "phoenix man", people created another word "peacock woman" with the same structure and different meaning from "phoenix man". It was a term for girls who lived in cities, have been loved by their parents from the day they were born, and have led lives of luxury and had an arrogant attitude. But under the promotion of "Phoenix man", "phoenix woman" referred to the same meaning as the "phoenix man". In fact, from the perspective of ideology, specific social and cultural background has given the phoenix and peacock to female's characteristics. Because there were word formation, like "phoenix man", people could strongly elicit "peacock woman" and "phoenix woman", which fully reflected the systematicness of language and the principle of analogy. Therefore, when people created a new word, they would choose or transform the original language.

From the diachronic perspective, the phoenix's initial meaning was male bird in ancient times, after this word was humanized to stand for male. Shuo Wen Jie Zi : "Feng, this word was hieroglyphic, it was like a bird. When it flew in the sky, tens of thousands of birds would follow it from far and near, so it had the same meaning as the Peng." Shi .Da.Ya.JuanA: "Phoenix was the mythological Chinese birds in ancient, the males were called Feng and the females called Huang." Feng and Huang could be called Fenghuang, it could also be called simply Feng. In this way, the phoenix could be a word that stood for phoenix, it could be a phrase that stood for male and female phoenixes. Mixing words had the same meaning, but it was different to separate it. This phenomenon could be explained through critical interpretation of ancient texts. In fact, there weren't phoenix in the nature, just there were some records about it in the ancient books, such as (Er Yan by Guo Pu Note)"the phoenix consisted of the head of a cock, the chin of a swallow, the neck of a snake, the back of a tortoise, the tail of a fish. Its height was six feet and body was beautiful five-colored"."There was a bird at the Dan Xue Mountain, it looked like a crane with five-colored. Its name was Fenghuang. Its head represented morality, its wing represented peace, its back represented loyalty, its abdomen represented integrity and its chest represented benevolence." Some scholars believed that phoenix combined all the beauty and virtues of animals in one. It was a totem for ancient ancestor.

Because the phoenix was the mythological bird, so it was often used to describe the holy or literary talent, such as Pang Tongdao in the Three Kingdoms period, his taoist name was Young Phoenix. "As precious and rare as phoenix feather and unicorn horns" was used to describe these talented people. Phoenix was also used to symbolize the emperor, "Feng Di" referred to a palace that person lived in before he became an emperor. "Feng Zhang" referred to the emperor's honor guard [1]. Feng was often used to describe the male partner. "The two Phoenixes flew side by side", "Two phoenixes sang songs" expressed a good harmony relationship between the couple. Sima Xiangru created "Feng Pursue Huang" to express his infinite admiration and warm pursuit to Zhuo Wenjun. According to the story of Sima Xiangru and Zhuo Wenjun's love, descendants wrote a famous song "Feng Pursue Huang". To sum up, in the ancient Chinese, the phoenix represented the male, and then represented talented people, too. But in modern Chinese, Feng and FengHuang stood for the female. Few people knew the origin of its meaning. Wu Yanrong found that in the evolution of a long history, gender of phoenix has changed from the male, hermaphrodite to female [2]. What was the underlying cause of this evolution? Through the study, the author believed that the semantic evolution of the phoenix was related with the semantic of dragon.

The dragon was a miraculous animal in Chinese mythology, that was good at changing, could draw clouds to rain and benefited to all creatures. It was said that the dragon sometimes could be invisible or visible, flied into the sky in the spring and dived into the abyss in the autumn, and it was the ancestor of all the scales and the boss of mythical animals (dragon, phoenix, kylin, and tortoise). It naturally became a symbol of imperial power, the emperors were called sons of the God. The dragon was not only exclusively used in the emperors, and they were frequently used to describe people with holiness or literary grace. Zhu Geliang always called himself Wolong, and he and Pang Tong were called Wolong chufeng. The development of language should conform to the principle of economy, if multiple words expressed the same meaning, there would be competition between these words, and as a result, some words have been eliminated or changed its meaning. Similarly, due to the similarity in meaning, dragon and phoenix must fight a decisive battle. Because the national psychology of the worship for dragon and the dragon and phoenix's characteristics reflected differences in human gender. The dragon with full strength was on behalf of the male and the phoenix was glamorous and embodied the distinguished air of elegance and coquetry. Therefore, the dragon dominated the male world, the phoenix had to dominate the female world, and they had duties to protect this world. This was the reason why we used Feng or Phoenix specifically to refer to women today. Not only has that, with change of the dragon and phoenix from deification to personification, its social status gradually changed because of competition. As the dragon was spoiled by the emperor, it became more and more aristocratic, but the phoenix changed from nobility to plebeian, so that the phoenix man in modern Chinese had a subordinate meaning of humble origin. Thus, vocabulary was a relatively strict system, and the use of a word and the evolution of its meaning restricted other members of the system.

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