BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg
BG PULSE JOURNAL

SYMBOLISM OF PLANTS IN CHINESE

G`ayratova Maftuna Dilshodovna
Email: uzbmaftunaxon1997@mail.ru
doi:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23154080

Annotation. the article is devoted to the symbolism of plants in Chinese. The meansing of the names of pines and flowers in plants are described within groups in terms of semantic features. Basic syntagmatic rows were identified.

Keywords: plant, feature, semantics, symbolism, Confucianism, Daosism, narration, mythology, expression, acknowledgment, homonym.

If we pay attention to the semantics of symbols, we may refer to the following sources: Chavannes, E. The Five Happinesses: Symbolism in Chinese Popular Art; Fang, J. P. Symbols and Rebuses in Chinese Art; and Imperial Tombs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties.[1]

In terms of their specific characteristics and the breadth of their semantic meanings, symbols can be described according to the following criteria: the name of the plant, its external appearance, the region where the plant grows, its gender classification, its interaction with other groups of symbols, and the use of the respective image in Chinese culture.

In her treatise History of Chinese Art, E. M. Kravtsova classifies trees into evergreen and deciduous species, as well as into “female” and “male” categories.[2] The pine tree belongs to the group of evergreen trees. It grows alone on mountain slopes and survives under the most difficult environmental conditions. This demonstrates its exceptional endurance and resilience. Accordingly, the symbolism of the pine tree is multifaceted and represents eternal life and immortality. In Confucian and Taoist traditions, this symbolism is also interpreted as a symbol of a person's inner stability and peace of mind. Alongside the pine, the cypress occupies a similar position in Chinese symbolism. In addition, both of these evergreen trees have been widely used in traditional Chinese medicine.

Bamboo is also regarded as one of the symbols of evergreen plants. In Chinese symbolism, bamboo is associated with resistance to various calamities and the ability to ward off misfortune. There is a traditional Chinese legend associated with this plant. According to the legend, a woman once became seriously ill and told her son that she wished to drink soup made from fresh bamboo. The devoted son was so distressed that he shed bitter tears in a place where bamboo grew. As a result, bamboo sprouted from the hardened ground after winter, and the son was able to prepare nourishing soup for his mother.

The flowering wild plum 梅花 méihuā is well known in Chinese symbolism as a calendar tree. It symbolizes the Chinese New Year, spring, and the birth of a living being. The flowers of the 梅花 méihuā tree are traditionally referred to as the “Queen of Chinese Flowers.” The first morpheme in the name 梅花 is considered homonymous with 美 “beautiful” and 眉 “eyebrow,” and this phonetic association is widely used in descriptions of female beauty. In addition, images of 梅花 méihuā flowers are widely used in Chinese decorative and applied arts, including patterns on ceramics, embroidery, and jewelry. There is also a distinct artistic genre known as 梅花 méihuā in Chinese applied art.

Furthermore, the symbolism of the pear tree 梨 lí occupies a special place in descriptions of female beauty in China.

According to M. E. Kravtsova, "female" and "male" plants are distinguished according to their characteristic features. Plants with thick and rough bark are primarily used to characterize the "male" category, symbolizing dignity, strength, and pride. "Female" plants, by contrast, are characterized by a delicate and softer structure and are used symbolically to describe feminine grace, elegance, and beauty.

The "male" trees include pine, cypress, bamboo, and poplar. The "female" trees include pear, plum, and the "weeping willow."

Flowers also occupy an important place in Chinese symbolism, particularly the peony, chrysanthemum, orchid, and lotus.

There are two types of peonies in the Chinese language: the herbaceous peony 芍药 sháoyào and the tree peony 牡丹 mǔdān.[3] In literary symbolism, the two types are not always distinguished and may be used in similar symbolic contexts. The peony is traditionally regarded in Chinese symbolism as a symbol of wealth, prosperity, and refinement.

The orchid 兰 lán and chrysanthemum 菊 jú[4] also occupy a special place in Chinese symbolism. In ancient Chinese mythology, these two flowers represented the divine world and ceremonial practices. Due to their pleasant fragrance, orchids were traditionally used to decorate the chambers of palace women and were regarded as a symbol of feminine beauty.

The chrysanthemum has been widely described in Chinese mythology as a symbol of longevity and immortality.

The lotus flower 荷花 occupies a particularly important place in Chinese symbolism.[5] In Chinese literature, it is also referred to as the "water lily." The seed of the lotus is expressed by the word 莲子 liánzǐ, which is phonetically similar to 连子, associated with the meaning of having sons in succession. Thus, the lotus may function as a symbol of continuation of the family line and male offspring. In addition, the lotus is a symbol of purity and moral cleanliness. When blooming, the lotus rises above the muddy water without carrying any of the impurities of the surrounding swamp, thereby symbolizing purity and spiritual integrity. The character 荷 is also associated through phonetic similarity with 和, which means "peace"; therefore, the lotus can also carry the symbolic meaning of harmony and peace.[6]

Regardless of their particular symbolic meanings, flowers in Chinese symbolism are also divided into "female" and "male" categories. The "male" flowers include plants with long and relatively firm leaves, whereas the "female" category includes flowers with more delicate and lush foliage.

The study of information concerning plant symbolism allows us to draw the following conclusions:

First, in the Chinese language, plant symbolism has primarily developed on the basis of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Second, in syntagmatic combinations, plant symbolism is closely integrated with particular plants and their associated symbolic meanings. A number of symbols are traditionally regarded as representations of longevity, beauty, and fertility.

Conclusion. The analysis of plant and flower symbolism in Chinese culture demonstrates that botanical images constitute an important component of the Chinese cultural and linguistic worldview. Their symbolic meanings are not limited to the physical characteristics of plants but are closely connected with traditional philosophical, religious, aesthetic, and social concepts.

First, plant symbolism in the Chinese language and culture was formed under the significant influence of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. These philosophical and religious traditions contributed to the development of symbolic interpretations associated with longevity, harmony, inner stability, purity, prosperity, and moral perfection.

Second, plant symbols acquire additional meanings through their syntagmatic combinations with other cultural symbols. The meaning of a particular plant or flower may therefore change or become more specific depending on the linguistic and cultural context in which it occurs.

Third, the semantic analysis demonstrates that individual plants and flowers may simultaneously possess several symbolic meanings. The pine and cypress, for example, symbolize longevity and endurance; bamboo represents resilience and the ability to overcome difficulties; the plum blossom is associated with spring, renewal, and beauty; the peony symbolizes wealth and prosperity; the chrysanthemum represents longevity; the orchid is associated with elegance and feminine beauty; and the lotus symbolizes purity, harmony, and the continuation of the family line.

Thus, plant symbolism represents a complex system of culturally determined meanings in which linguistic features, mythology, philosophy, traditional beliefs, aesthetic concepts, and everyday practices interact. The study of such symbols makes it possible to reveal important elements of the Chinese national worldview and to better understand the relationship between language, culture, and traditional Chinese values.

REFERENCES

1. Gorelov, V. M. Lexicology of the Chinese Language. Moscow, 1984. 90 p.
2. Wu Cheng'en. Imperial Tombs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Beijing, 2002. 250 p.
3. Kravtsova, E. M. History of Chinese Art. Saint Petersburg, 2004. 78 p.
4. Korotkov, N. The Main Features of the Morphological Structure of the Chinese Language. Moscow, 1968. 90 p.
5. Chinese-Russian Dictionary. Beijing, 2000. 87 p.
6. Cheng Guanlei. 汉语次兰夫. Jiangsu, 2001. 114 p.