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Exploring the Female Consciousness in the Ancient Greek Period--Based on the image of the ancient Greek goddess Artemis and her mythological story

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Abstract:
Female consciousness in the ancient Greek period presents equal and independent as well as diversified characteristics in the image of the goddess Artemis and the mythological stories. Firstly, Artemis shows the female consciousness of pursuing equal human dignity in the mythological stories. Secondly, Artemis emphasizes women's individual value and pursues female's consciousness of sexual independence of their own choice. Thirdly, Artemis demonstrates the female consciousness of pursuing unique social functions in the mythological stories. The value and significance of the image of the goddess Artemis and her mythological stories lie not only in the diversified development of women's character and identity in the ancient Greek period, but also in the promotion of women's political and social status in the ancient Greek period. The image of the goddess Artemis and her mythological stories played an important role in ancient Greek culture, and her existence not only enriched the connotation of ancient Greek culture, but also promoted the germination and diversified development of women's consciousness in the ancient Greek period.

Keywords:
ancient Greek, Artemis, female consciousness, equality, independence

1.Research Background

1.1 Introduction of Artemis

Artemis, also known as Cynthia (the name of the mountain where Artemis was born, and thus her alias), the goddess of moon in ancient Greek mythology, "mistress of the beasts and lord of the wilderness"; one of the twelve Olympus gods; and the daughter of Zeus and Leto, twin sister of Apollo. Artemis was free,independent and loved the wilderness. She is regarded as one of the three virgin goddesses of Olympus, together with Hestia and Athena. She swore to Zeus to be a free woman who would never marry, while claiming the bow and arrows, the mountains, and the Nymph maid who maintained her hunting boots. She took pleasure in hunting among the forests and mountains.

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1.2 Conclusion of research

Artemis's words and actions demonstrate the budding of a woman's sense of independence, her desire and pursuit of freedom, her active defence of her own and women's dignity, and her strong opposition to male aggression. Artemis' deeds inspired ancient Greek women to pursue freedom, equality and human dignity, and to fight for more rights and protection for women. At the same time, Artemis, the goddess of many gods, represented a diversified image of women, emphasizing their own unique talents and advantages. Under the influence of Artemis, ancient Greek women gradually broke away from their subordinate social status and pursued diversified social roles and a free and independent life. Under the influence of the image of Artemis and her deeds, women's consciousness began to germinate in ancient Greece.

2.The pursuit of independent and equal human dignity

2.1 The historical origin of human dignity

Roughly divided into three periods, with the Enlightenment as the centre stage,the initial stage is the Pre-Enlightenment period,which was dominated by the ideas of the thinkers of the Greco-Roman period and the theologians of the Middle Ages. The thinkers of the Greco-Roman period had already begun to explore the nature of man and advocated a return to man himself. As Socrates said, "Know thyself", the thinkers had begun to preach a "human-centred" view of life. Then came the Middle Ages, when it was believed that human beings were created by God, and that those who were God's people must share in God's dignity. It was said that "there is no distinction between Jew and non-Jew, between free man and slave, between man and woman, for you are all one in Jesus Christ " . This statement embodies the idea of the equality of all human beings and the "divine" dignity of the human person as the children of God. However, at this time, people were attached to God or religion, the importance of the individual was covered up, and the connotation of the personal dignity of the human being as a subject was not expanded compared with that of the Greco-Roman period, and the theory of human dignity was still centred on the ideological concepts of the Greco-Roman era. But the thinking about the equality of human dignity between the two sexes has already appeared as early as in ancient Greece. Tracing back to its origins, its important ideological viewpoints originated from the image of the goddess Artemis and her mythological deeds. The goddess Artemis clearly pursued equality between men and women, defended women's honour and dignity, and believed that women's sexual power was inviolable and should be protected by necessary and appropriate means.

2.2 Defending personal reputation and resisting sexual discrimination

The goddess Artemis pays close attention to her personal reputation and resolutely resists rumors and discrimination. Aura, the goddess of the breeze, became jealous of Artemis's feminine figure, and claimed that Artemis had lost her chastity because she used her charm to seduce males. The move sparked a strong complaint from Artemis. So Artemis asked Nemesis, the goddess of "revenge", to defend her reputation and dignity. Artemis then asked Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance (meaning "vengeance" in Greek), to take revenge on the rumour-monger, Aurora, in order to defend her honour and dignity. Nemesis is the ruthless goddess of vengeance in Greek mythology, also known as Adrastia, meaning "the inevitable one".The unstop-

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pable, divine punishment from the Nemesis, as told in the Genealogy of the Gods, is an important theme in the Greek worldview that provides a unifying reference for Sophocles' Greek tragedy and many other literary works."Nemesis, born of Nyx, who causes death, becomes a torment to mortals subject to death." Mortals and even the gods are in awe of Nemesis .Nemesis is not the tragic, violent and bloody revenge of ancient Greece heroes, but the absolute rational,inevitable and divine justice.Artemis asked Nemesis for help, showing that her retaliation against rumors is rational, legitimate, and compliant. In the legend, Nemesis acknowledged Artemis' motive and extended a helping hand to her, symbolizing the social admission of basic female rights.

2.3 Resistance to male voyeurism and protection of female privacy

Artemis has no tolerance for any aggression or insult to women. This is exemplified in her ordering her hounds to kill the voyeur Actaeon.Artemis's behaviour highlights her strong determination to fight against male invasion of female privacy.This dramatic ancient Greek mythological story is brilliantly presented in the painting of Diana and Actaeon.The story of Diana, the Roman goddess of Artemis, and the hunter Actaeon is a tragic one: Actaeon overheard Artemis bathing in the Cithaeron, and in her anger, Artemis turned her into a stag, which was eventually bitten to death by the hounds.This storyline has been repeatedly depicted and shown by painters throughout the ages. Of all the paintings in history, that of Tiziano, known as the "Father of Western Painting", is one of the finest of its kind.In the painting, Actaeon surprises Artemis, who stares angrily at him. The maids are depicted in various postures: covering up, hiding behind pillars, and panicking. Actaeon knows he's caused a disaster, dropping his bow and arrow. The scene is dramatic, rich in expressions, and Prägnanz. According to Laon, this moment is the most beautiful and artistically appealing,inviting imagination.

Actaeon's voyeurism against Artemis is blasphemy, Artemis killed him for crossing the line, considered offensive to her dignity. Actaeon’s behavior reflects the ancient patriarchal society's disrespect for women,while the goddess’s punishment serve as warnings , urging respect, which was an important part of early feminism progress. Since the disintegration of the matriarchal social structure in ancient times, men have gradually taken over the power, and patriarchal society has become the mainstream, in which women have been relegated to the subordinate and objectified bottom group, but even so, women still retain their own physical and spiritual "territories", and the safety and security of bodily privacy is the last line of defence. The privacy of the body is the last line of defence that cannot be offended. At a time when the relationship between men and women had not yet been complicated by civilization, crossing this clear line meant being punished by death. The widespread dissemination of the myth also served as a stern warning from the religious and political forces represented by the female high priests in ancient Greece to the traditional patriarchy advocates to respect women's wishes and to ensure that women's privacy and human dignity were inviolable.Thus, the image of Artemis contributed greatly to the awakening of women's consciousness in ancient Greece.She taught women not to tolerate any violation of themselves.Her image inspired ancient Greek women to pursue equality and dignity, fought for more rights and protection for women, and embodied the firm will of ancient Greek women to pursue equality and independence.

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3.Pursuing women's sense of sexual independence

3.1 The concept of virgin goddesses

The goddess Artemis was not only independent and free, keen on the wild life, but also held a special concern for unmarried virgins.Together with Hestia and Athena, she was regarded as the three virgin goddesses on Mount Olympus whom Aphrodite could not persuade or deceive".In ancient Greek culture, "virginity" was not a purely anatomical or physiological concept, but referred to a sociological state, that is, the state of being "unmarried" as opposed to "woman, woman, wife". It refers to a sociological state of being "unmarried" as opposed to "woman, woman, wife".According to the ancient Greeks, an unmarried woman was an "unmarried woman" or a "virgin".For example, after the unmarried Princess Creusa of Athens gave birth to Ion with Apollo, her father still regarded her as a "virgin" and married her to Xuthus; therefore, virgins in ancient Greek culture referred to women who had not yet entered into marriage, and whose social status was not that of "wife" or "mother".Therefore, virgins in ancient Greek culture referred to women who had not entered into marriage and whose social status was not that of "wife" or "mother".

The real reason for the three goddesses' commitment to chastity stems from the awakening of women's sense of independence during the ancient Greek period and their willingness to explore a new value of life outside of the traditional female marital and family roles.At the same time, Artemis differs from the other goddesses of chastity in her reasons for chastity.Artemis's status as the goddess of chastity and her formation of the female hunters symbolize women's awareness of sexual power and their pursuit of independence in the ancient Greek period.

3.2 A sense of sexual independence that affirms women's self-worth

Hestia (meaning "hearth") is the goddess of hearth and home, and also the goddess of sacred fire in ancient Greek mythology.She was one of the twelve Olympus gods, and was considered by Hesiod to be the eldest daughter of Cronus, the second king of the gods, and Rhea, the mother of the Olympus gods. Hestia was the most venerated and ancient deity on Mount Olympus, and was regarded as a triple goddess along with Athena and Artemis. Legend has it that Poseidon, the god of sea, and Apollo, the god of sun, had proposed to her and caused a dispute. In order to maintain harmony among the gods, Hestia refused both and swore in the name of Zeus, the king of the gods, that she would remain unmarried for life, vowing to serve mankind and the gods with all her might. Zeus was so impressed that he allowed Hestia prioritized access to the public offerings, and established her primacy among the Olympian goddesses. The sacred fire of Vesta symbolizes her presence and is a symbol of the permanence, stability, harmony and prosperity of the family.In ancient times, the fire on the family altar was lit by the ancestors, and the descendants were obliged to perpetuate it, otherwise it meant the extinction of the family. The hearth and the altar symbolized the life and spiritual core of the whole group. When settlers built new colonies, the sacred fire was passed on to future generations with the brave settlers. In this process, the goddesses of hearth embodied the ancient Greek ruling class's traditional conception of women's gender roles; women were expected to take care of the family, supervise household chores, and mediate in community strife.

However, Artemis and her followers broke through the traditional patriarchal conception of women's disci-

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pline. Compared with the image of housewives led by Hestia, Artemis sought new possibilities for women's development in society as a goddess of freedom wandering in the mountains and forests and outside the social structure of the traditional city-state. She advocates chastity and forms a team of chaste hunters, not to comply with men's physical discipline of women, but to lead women to think about the harmonious relationship between the same sex and the spiritual adjustment of the self; she blesses the hunters, and is robust and good at fighting, to promote the value of self-defence of using force to protect oneself when necessary, and at the same time to obtain the resources of subsistence through hunting; she pays attention to the growth of the next generation, and help the children in the capacity of advocate rather than protector.

3.3 Advocacy of women's sense of sexual independence by their own choice

In contrast to Athena, the god of war and wisdom, who despised male bravery and tactlessness, and who revered spiritual communion and resisted carnal desires, both Athena and Artemis had a history of being venerated as the Great Goddess of the tribe. The Great Goddess, also known as the prime goddess of maternity, "refers specifically to the largest deity originating prior to patriarchal societies, the ideological core of prehistoric societies that hunted, and the earliest gods to appear in primitive beliefs." By examining the religious culture of the Tungus peoples, we can find their bird goddesses, similar to Athena, and their deer and bear goddesses, similar to Artemis, who possessed a fertility identity and were even associated with the corresponding male gods. However, in the ancient Greek mythological system, they lost the status of the great goddess and became unmarried women, perhaps because of the functions they retained related to hunting, skills, etc.redirected to males. In the case of Athena, for example, she mastered the skills that usually belonged to men, participated in most male activities, and operated in areas controlled by male deities. Even in her outward depiction, she exhibits stronger unisex characteristics than the non-virgin goddesses. This can also be seen in the ritual traditions of Athena, as described by Herodotus: they held an annual consecration of the god Athena, during which the maidens were divided into two groups and engaged each other with stones and sticks. This, they said, was done to honour the local goddess Athena in accordance with ancestral traditions.

Through the belief in goddesses who mastered skills that were traditionally masculine in society, women in ancient Greece began to break away from their roles and status as "women of the home" and "servants of men", and used their independent, unmarried, virginal status as a springboard to explore a life of diversity and "female power". The unmarried virginity of women was a springboard for exploring a life of diversity and "female power". In contrast to the potential intellectual discrimination against men by Athena and her followers, the goddess Artemis recognizes that men are intelligent, not inferior beings, and advocates equality of ability between men and women. For example, Artemis and her band of hunters had established a good relationship with Orion, son of Poseidon, the god of the sea, by hunting together in the jungle. After Orion's death, out of regret and in honour of her late friend, Artemis had him rise up into the sky as the constellation Orion.

At the same time, Artemis tends to explore and emphasize women's own unique talents. She gained the status and authority of the goddess of midwifery by helping her mother, Leto, to give birth to Apollo, the god of the sun. To a certain extent, the status of goddess of midwifery represented the recognition by the religious ruling class of the time that female fertility was important for the survival of society. However, similar to Athena, the goddess detested irrational behaviors stemming from sexual desire and the oppression of a patri-

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archal society, and demonstrated her desire for independence in the pursuit of sexual rights: a virginal minor girl who took a vow of chastity could receive the goddess's blessing for eternity, join the female-only hunter's band, and follow the goddess for all eternity. "While he was bewildered and perplexed, Helen came down from the fumigated upper floor with her attendants, looking like Artemis the Golden Arrow." In this passage, Helen appears with a group of maids of honour, just as the mythological Artemis was always accompanied by female hunters. Artemis took the vow of non-marriage very seriously, and if a member of the hunters voluntarily renounced their chastity, they would break away from the party and, as with ordinary ancient Greek maidens, hand over their girdles to the temple of Artemis as proof of stepping into the stage of matrimony . After consummation of the marriage, they could still spend the rest of their lives as female priests in the Temple of Artemis or in other jobs. However, violating the vow of chastity and deceiving the goddess could result in severe punishment. For example, when the goddess's attendant Calisto was seduced by Zeus and concealed her pregnancy, Artemis transformed her into a bear and banished her in a fit of rage and resentment. But after Calisto's death, she honored him by raising him to the stars, which legend says is the origin of the constellation Ursa Major. This myth and legend reflects the religious significance of female chastity. In Ancient Greece, female virginity had a positive connotation: a woman's freedom to choose whether to marry or not symbolized the awakening of women's sexual independence at that time.

4.Pursuing women's unique social functions

4.1 Functions of the guardian of natural life and order

In Ancient Greek mythology, Apollo, the god of the sun, was in charge of laws and regulations, art and prophecy, and was good at playing the harp and shooting arrows with a bow. Therefore, the Ancient Greeks believed that the manipulation of bowstring artifacts, such as the harp and the hunting bow, required the gods to be talented and hard-working, and that the harp and the bow and arrows were the symbols of wisdom and perseverance in the conception of the Ancient Greek society. On this basis, the connotation of the bowstring was given even greater significance - order - as in the case of Orphism, a secret Greek religious sect that believed that the harp could harmonize the order of all things in the world.

The ancient Greeks believed that Artemis, who also loved the harp and the bow and arrow, ruled over the laws of natural reproduction and possessed the ability and status to master the laws of natural evolution. At the same time, the name of the goddess can also reflect her ability to guard the order of the priesthood and status, some people believe that Artemis's name "Artemis" is derived from "Ari-themis", in which "ari-themis" as a Latin prefix. "as a Latin prefix meaning "very" for emphasis, and "Themis" meaning "justice/maintaining order". The word "Themis" means "justice/maintaining order", and the whole phrase is linked together as "good at maintaining order", thus denoting the goddess's talent and unique position in charge of order. Another theory is that the name of the goddess comes from "themisto", which is Latin for "one who delivers oracles/prophecies", indicating that the goddess is the agent of the will of the gods, administering justice on behalf of the gods on Olympus and upholding the laws established by the gods. This expression gave the goddess a more authoritative function and status. In addition, in a significant portion of ancient Greek literature, the goddess is seen as having the unique function and status of punishing evil and promoting good, as expressed by Plato in his interview with his teacher Socrates, through the mouth of Socrates, who claims that

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Artemis' name derives from her physical and mental health, and her conformity to the times, and that she is "the one who recognizes the virtues" and is able to sift the virtuous from amongst the many. Plato said that Artemis was named after her physical and mental health and her fitness for the times, and that she was "the one who knows virtue" and was able to sift the virtuous from the many. The Ode of Callimachus, an ancient Greek poet, describes the goddess as a sort of judge who travelled between cities and states: "The goddess aims her silver bow at the unrighteous of the city". In a sense, this is an acknowledgement and praise of women's unique talents and social status in social reality.

4.2 Functions of reproduction,hunting,and harvesting

Artemis, in her original role as goddess of fertility, symbolized the powerful female reproductive capacity. As a result, the worship of the Greek ancestors of the moon goddess actually originated from the reverence for reproduction. As mankind entered the agricultural age, the image of Artemis as the goddess of the moon and the goddess of the hunt gradually faded, but the worship of her symbol of fertility and reproduction was strengthened. In the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of Antiquity, the image of Artemis, the goddess of breasts, is highly revered and symbolizes Artemis' great contribution to human reproduction. The moon symbolizes femininity, softness and fertility in many ancient civilizations. In matriarchal societies, where productivity was initially low and fertility was the dominant force in the politics of sexual relations, women were generally given a higher social status than men, and in ancient times, hunting was mostly carried out at night, and women's strong fertility was seen as a symbol of the abundance of the earth's fertility. This not only determined the amount of prey in the neighbourhood, but also affected the outcome of the hunt. Therefore, the female fertility cult in matrilineal society was given special significance. As for the image of the goddess Artemis, her priesthood was a fusion of primitive nature worship, fertility worship and hunting bounty. As human society entered the agrarian age, the first two images of Artemis were gradually forgotten, but her image of fertility still had an important place in her overall religious worship.

5.The value and significance of the image of Artemis and its mythology

5.1 Promoting the diversification of women's personalities and identities

Artemis is the only female moon goddess among the many moon gods in the religious systems of ancient civilizations such as ancient Egypt, Šumer, India and Germanic civilizations at the crossroads of the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. Thus, Artemis symbolizes the beginning of the diversification of women's identity in the ancient Greco-Roman civilization, although the image of the beautiful and chaste maiden from the goddess Artemis has the implication of pandering to the patriarchal society. However, from the perspective of women's inner beauty, the existence of Artemis transcended the stereotypical image of women's gentle and submissive character in other civilizations of the same period, and women could also possess "masculine" characters such as resistance to power, bravery, and the pursuit of fairness and justice.

In addition to her image, Artemis possesses a number of powers that are unique among male moon gods and female deities of other civilizations. Her titles include: Goddess of Chastity, Goddess of Forests and Plants, Goddess of the Harvest, Goddess of Birds and Beasts, Goddess of the Hunt, Goddess of Unmarried Women and Children, Goddess of Justice, Goddess of the Underworld, Goddess of the Moon, and so on. In

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many mythological systems, few goddesses have so much power and so many social functions. Artemis's intersection of powers reflects the fact that women, led by the religious priests, began to break away from the traditional, stereotypical social roles of women in the ancient Greek period, and expressed their demand for diversified social roles and identities to the ruling class. It also reflects the people's self-reflection on the concept of gender-determined social division of labour at that time.

The Homeric Hymns record the myth of the Amazon women warriors who believed in Artemis, the goddess of the hunt, and that there were only women among the Amazons, who were not only responsible for defending the country, but also invaded the neighbouring countries in order to expand their territories. Some Greeks believed that Amazon originated from "amazos", meaning "mutilated". They believed that Amazonian women had their right breasts cut off to make it easier for them to draw their bows and throw their spears. Herodotus called the Amazons "androktones", meaning "man-killers". Homer called them "antianeirai", meaning "those who fight like men", while the more plausible alternative is that the word Amazon is derived from the Persian word "ha-mazan", meaning warrior. "which means warrior. Either way, it reflects the image of the ancient Greeks, and indeed the Mediterranean region as a whole, of the Amazonian warrior woman as a warrior, and in the spiritual iconography of this martial female people, their worship of the power of the goddess Artemis is imprinted, and the existence of the Amazons is a vivid example of the diversification of women's identities and personalities that was fueled by the image of the goddess Artemis.

6.Promotion of women's political and social advancement

6.1 Artemis worship in Sparta

The belief in the goddess Artemis conferred a higher social status on women, who were able to be honored as mothers of warriors and own property. Young women could work as assistant priests in the temples of Artemis, and in order to please the goddess at male bar mitzvahs, they would assist in whipping the young men who were to be sacrificed as "the oracle demanded that they sprinkle human blood on the altar." The custom, though slightly cruel, provided female priests with considerable social status and influence. According to the ancient Greek writer Libanius, flogging was still practised at Lagoonian festivals as late as the 4th century AD. By working in the temples and participating in rituals, female priests demonstrated their power and responsibility in religion, thus strengthening their position in the politico-religious dichotomy of the ruling society of Ancient Greece.

6.2 Ephesus Temple

Otrera, the first Amazon queen, built a temple to Artemis at Ephesus on the west coast of Turkey. Every year, Otrera would organize a great celebration in the temple. The Amazons would spend the entire day doing war dances in the streets of Ephesus, hanging looted treasures over idols and offering them to Artemis, and the temple was considered Otrera's most outstanding deed. The temple remained standing after her departure. The Temple of Artemis remained standing until the end of the Ancient Greek era, and even when the Roman Empire was on the verge of extinction. The Ephesians continued to restore it, even though it was destroyed several times. At the dawn of the Christian era, the remains of the temple still existed, and according to Christian legend, the saint John travelled to Ephesus as a missionary, delivering Christian ideas on the site of the

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former temple. Amazonian army had prayed at the temple of Artemis to gain the goddess's protection from the Maenads, the followers of the god of wine. Based on this myth, and taking into account that Artemis herself had a female guardianship, the Temple of Artemis gained a reputation as a refuge for women. Any female who came to the altar to pray for protection would be blessed by Artemis. If necessary, the priestesses of the temple and the entire city of Ephesus would fight for her. This provided a certain role of physical protection for women, which in turn increased their sense of security and respect in society.

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