

Research on the bird image in Shanhai Jing

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Abstract. The Classic of Mountains and Seas is the original work of Chinese mythology, which records rich images of gods and mythological stories. Bird is a very important mythological image among them. Through the review of the literature, it can be seen that the birds in Shanhai Jing can be divided into four categories according to their physical characteristics: normal birds, alien birds, human-bird combinations and other categories. According to their functions, they can also be divided into four categories: auspicious bird, ominous bird, medicinal bird, and defensive bird. The paper comprehensively analyzes the bird imagery in the Book of Mountains and Seas from the surface to the inside by classifying the morphological characteristics of birds, analyzing their own functions, and exploring the reasons for ancient bird worship. The bird imagery in Shanhai Jing is a product of totem worship by ancient people. The study not only deepens the understanding of the text of Shanhai Jing, but also provides a deeper exploration of ancient Chinese mythology, with certain research value.

Keywords: Shanhai Jing, Bird image, Totemism, myth.

1. Introduction

The bird image is one of the most characteristic contents in Shanhai Jing, and there are also many scholars who have paid attention to it. In short, some scholars discussed the later application of the bird image in Shanhai Jing from the perspectives of clothing design and animation design; Some scholars discussed the image of birds from the perspective of text comparison; [1] [2] Some scholars also studied the combination of humans and birds in the Shanhai Jing from a mythological perspective, [3] or the images of gods and humans accompanied by humans and birds. [4] The above studies are relatively one-sided and lack comprehensive and systematic research on bird images in the "Shanhai Jing". Currently, this area is still an academic blank. In view of this, this paper chooses the bird image in the "Shanhai Jing" as the research object. The paper mainly analyzes the classification of bird images, worship ideas, and future influences.

2. Study on the Classification of Bird Images in the Shanhai Jing

According to the statistics, there were 117 bird scriptures recorded in Shanhai jing.[5] This paper will classify the images of birds in Shanhai Jing from the point of view of physical characteristics, functional attributes and so on.

2.1. Classified by physical features

According to the records of the Scripture, the images of birds in Shanhai Jing can be roughly divided into four categories: normal birds, alien birds, human-bird combinations and other categories.

2.1.1. Normal birds

Just as the name suggested, this kind of bird's physical characteristics belonged to the birds in a biological sense. According to statistics, there are 28 places involving this kind of birds in Shanhai Jing. Among them, the West Mountain Scripture covered the greatest number of places. There were 9 places in total, which were the Tong Qu, the Jun bird, the Qinyuan bird, the Shengyu bird, the Min bird, the Li bird, the Parrot, the Feiyi bird, The Phoenix bird, the Oriole, the Jingwei bird.

Through the regularity of text language expression, it can be found that when introducing normal birds, the writing pattern as "their appearance is like..." is often used. This expression is based on knowledge of common birds. Through this comparison, it is easier to help readers establish the image of such unfamiliar birds. Such as the Feiyi bird in Xishan Jing was described as Shaped like a quail, the Qitu bird in Beishan Jing as described as Shaped like a crow, the Qinggeng bird in Zhongshan Jing was described as Shaped like a magpie.[6] This form of comparison often compares unfamiliar birds to familiar birds to help readers understand the text. Next, the scripture will introduce the color and shape of the bird's beak, head, foot, tail and other parts. This kind of writing adds weight to the normal existence of the bird.

2.1.2. Alien birds

Alien birds are a review of birds in the Shanhai Jing that have completely different morphological characteristics from ordinary birds. This kind of bird is similar to the common bird, and the words "its shape" appear in many scriptures, but they also have completely different organs from the ordinary birds. This kind of bird is the most recorded in the Book of West Mountain, with 10 of them, followed by the Book of North Mountain with 6 species, and the distribution of other locations is less. See the table 1 below for details. Phoenix is a special kind of bird among the alien birds, its appearance is similar to that of the Luan bird, and which appears many times in the Shanhai Jing scriptures, such as the Book of the South-mountain, the Book of the Overseas western, the Book of the Great Wilderness South, the Book of the Great Wilderness West, the Book of the Great Wilderness North, the Book of Inside the See etc. From these records, it is not difficult to see the special position of Phoenix in the eyes of the ancients.

Table 1. The Species and Distribution of Alien Birds in Shanhai Jing

Numble	location	Types of birds
1	Xishan Jing	10
2	Beishan Jing	6
3	Nanshan Jing	5
4	Dongshan Jing	3
5	Zhongshan Jing	2
6	Others	6

Through the textual narration of this kind of birds, we can find that the written information of this kind of birds is more developed and richer, and its expression is different from that of the normal birds. Such as the Shusi Bird in the Book of West Mountain which looks like an owl in appearance, but has humanoid feet; the QIYU Bird in looks the Book of West Mountain which looks like an ordinary crow, but has three heads, six tails, and likes to laugh. Alien birds either look different from ordinary birds, or the number of body organs is different from normal birds.

2.1.3. Human-bird combinations

This type of images is characterized by a human face with a bird body and a bird head with a human body, and among which, the image of human face with bird body is the most common. As the record from the Book of the Great Wilderness East, On the island of the East China Sea, there lived a god, with human face and bird body, two yellow snake hanging ears to wear, feet trample two yellow snakes, named YUXU. Also, there are other similar records in the book. The most representative of the human-bird gods in the book of Shanhai Jing is Jingwei.

2.1.4. Other categories

For this type of bird, the introduction in the text is simple and lacks specific descriptions of its image, the book directly provides their geographical location or attributes.

2.2. Functional characteristics

In addition to focusing on introducing the morphology and other characteristics of birds in its writing, the Shan Hai Jing also provides detailed explanations from a functional perspective. According to the quality of symptoms, the medicinal effects of treating diseases, and the defense against disasters, birds can be divided into four types:

2.2.1. Auspicious bird

Once this kind of bird appears, it will bring some kind of auspicious sign to the surrounding area. As long as it appears, whether it is flood disaster, drought, war or other natural and man-made disasters which all can be quickly put to rest, and allowing the people to restore a happy and prosperous life. The bird recorded in the book is very rare, with only two examples: One is the Phoenix. As noted in the book of the South-mountain: there is a kind of bird in Danxue Mountain, which is shaped like an ordinary chicken, with colorful feathers all over the body, the name Phoenix, the pattern on the head is the shape of the word "Virtue", the pattern on the wing is the shape of the word "Righteousness", the pattern on the back is the shape of the word "ceremony", the pattern on the chest is the shape of the word "benevolence", and the pattern on the abdomen is the shape of the word "Integrity". It is a symbol of auspiciousness and brings peace and tranquility to people. The other is the Luan Bird, the book of West-mountain noted: In the Nv-chuang mountain, there lives a kind of bird called Luan, which has a pheasant-like tail and colorful feathers. Its appearance signifies peace.

2.2.2. Ominous bird

The appearance of ominous birds will bring unlucky phenomena, such as drought, flood and war. According to the Book of Shanhan Jing, there are a total of 21 species of birds symbolizing disasters. Among them, there are the most species of birds that can destroy the country, with a total of seven species. Secondly, there are four types of birds that cause drought. Some birds can bring war, plague or flood. There are two kinds of these birds each. There are different kinds of birds that can bring other disasters. As shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The Species and Distribution of Ominous Birds in Shanhai Jing

Numble	Types of disasters brought	Types of birds
1	Let the country perish	7
2	Dry Damage	4
3	War	2
4	Plague	2
5	Flood	2
6	Others	4

2.2.3. Medicinal bird

Such birds can be used to treat some diseases of human beings. According to statistics, a total of 19 species of birds are of great help to human physical and mental health. The birds such as Feiyi, Shusi and Jiao can treat certain physical diseases, such as skin diseases and so on. The birds such as Guanguan, Feiba, and Lingyao have a significant effect on improving people's psychological state.

In addition, birds have other medical functions. This shows that the medicinal functions of birds in Shanhai Jing are very comprehensive.

2.2.4. Defensive bird

Such birds can resist attacks or prevent disasters. There are a total of seven types of birds in this category, five of which have the same function of avoiding or defending against fires, such as the golden pheasant, the Min Bird and the Sangyi Bird, etc. There are two remaining types: one is the Yu Bird from the book of the north-mountain, which can defend troops. The image of this bird is not

uncommon in cultural relics such as silk paintings and stone carvings of the Han Dynasty. Another type of bird is Qinggeng from the book of Zhongshan, which "can resist epidemics".

Generally speaking, from the appearance characteristics, there are 32 kinds of bird images recorded in Shan Hai Jing that are similar to ordinary birds, and 31 kinds of bird images with different organ numbers compared with ordinary birds, while the combination of human-bird images and other types bird images are relatively few. Functionally, the birds with medicinal functions are the most, and the birds with auspicious functions are the least. From these varied records, it is not difficult to see the ancient people's yearning for stability, peaceful life and good health.

3. Study of the bird worship thought in Shanhai Jing

There are hundreds of animals recorded in Shanhai Jing, among which birds are the most important. Through combing, it can be found that the worship of the bird image in Shanhai Jing can be roughly divided into three types: ancient people's fantasy of the sky, belief in gods, political needs and personal needs in life.

3.1. Worship of the flying ability of birds

Compared with other animals, the worship of birds reflects the human yearning for free flight ability. And the people with bird characteristics recorded in the Shanhai Jing are the best evidence. For example, the people in the "Huantou Kingdom" recorded in the book of South Overseas have human faces, possess bird wings and beaks, and are fishing. There are also people from the "Feather Kingdom", who have human heads but are covered with feathers. The combination image of human face and bird body in Shanhai Jing reflects the ancient people's worship of birds' flying ability.

This kind of worship is clearly reflected in the fairy tale of Jingwei reclamation in Shanhai Jing, which concentrates on the idea of the interconversion of man and bird. According to the "Beishan Classic", the female child was originally the daughter of Emperor Yan, but accidentally drowned in the sea while playing by the east coast. The dead girl was filled with resentment towards the East China Sea and turned into a bird named Jingwei. Every day, she brought stones and small branches from the Mount of Haijiu and swore to fill the East China Sea. This behavior continued day after day without stopping. This story focuses on the sadness of human beings being unable to fly, as well as the desire to change this unfortunate situation by transforming into birds.

3.2. Worship product of belief in gods.

In Shanhai Jing, there are only two kinds of auspicious birds: the Phoenix and the Luan Bird. The Phoenix appears many times in Shanhai Jing, and has the remarkable characteristics of "singing and dancing", "covered in colorful patterns" and "accompanying the emperor around". Among them, the identity of "accompanying the emperor around" is clearly a product of the worship of the ancestors' concept of God. The image of the phoenix changed from a subordinate deity who surrendered to God during the Yin Shang dynasties to a symbol of destiny that replaced God during the Western Zhou period. This is the worship of gods of the ancestors.[7] The Luan Bird is also an auspicious bird in Shanhai Jing and has always appeared as a mount for immortals in mythological stories. The function of Luan bird is the same as that of Phoenix bird. "Seeing makes the world peaceful" also covers Luan with a mysterious color, and makes Luan become an equal existence with Phoenix. Since the Han Dynasty, the saying of auspicious phoenix birds has been widely circulated, especially during the Wei, Jin, Ming, and Qing dynasties. The Confucian theory of auspicious omen meets the demand of the ruling class for the civilian class to create ideological cages.[8]

In addition to these two types of birds, there is also a divine bird called Three-legged Golden Crow. Shanhai Jing does not give much description of this divine bird, only a short sentence "all the suns are carried by the three-legged Golden Crow". The three-legged Golden Crow is a bird closely related to the sun, playing the role of carrying the sun and traveling in the air, which means it is a divine bird

related to the sun. The three-legged Golden Crow not only carries the sun, but also often appears in later mythological legends, making it a divine bird comparable to the phoenix.

3.3. Worship based on the practicality of life

The emergence of worship comes from practicality. In the era of extreme lack of material conditions, the meat of birds, on the one hand, can meet the survival needs of the people, is a rare food. On the other hand, eating the meat of birds can cure some diseases of the body. In ancient times, people's medical level was low, and the therapeutic and defensive functions of these birds in *Shanhai Jing* were also people's yearning for a better life.

In primitive society, hunting was an important food source for ancestors. And the shooting culture is developed from hunting. It can be seen that in ancient times, shooting culture was related to bird worship. There is a group of concentric circles on the bird's chest on the pottery bird pattern map of Shuangqiao site in Jiaxing, which may be the original arrow target. Birds are one of the earliest hunting targets of human beings.[9] The bird worship of ancestors is closely related to life.

4. Conclusion

The bird images recorded in *Shanhai Jing* have the characteristics of lustrous and dazzling, implying authenticity, divinity, and it is an important image of Chinese mythology.[10] Through the analysis of the bird imagery related texts in *Shanhai Jing*, we not only provide an intuitive understanding of the various unique bird's species in the Classic, but also traces their value in existence and the reasons for their worship. It can be said that bird imagery has significant political significance in the traditional Chinese cultural system. This type of research can not only uncover excellent genes in traditional culture, but also enhance readers' recognition of traditional Chinese culture, contributing to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

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